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Saturday 1 August 2009

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- Perfect perches
- Better backgrounds
- Shutter speeds and movement
- Bird photo books reviewed



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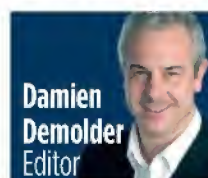
Canon



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Amateur Photographer For everyone who loves photography

Get set for some ornithography



Damien Demolder
Editor

Some people might argue that living in Essex, as I do, rather restricts a photographer's choice of subject matter. Being

mostly very flat, the county is not the first destination of the landscape photographer, and some more unkind (and equally misled) commentators might suggest it is hardly prime portraiture country, either. Yet there is one subject that is in abundance in this oft-maligned corner of our islands, and that is the bird. The mud flats, marshlands and extensive reservoirs provide important resting places for migrating wading species, as well as food for endless other birds. It's ironic, then, that the only things I haven't really photographed much in Essex are birds. But that is all set to change. Having been inspired by the advice in this issue, I've just dusted off my long lenses and am now all set for some ornithography.

Birds really are all around us the whole time, no matter where we live, but they are not the type of subject you can just catch on the off-chance. You do actually have to prepare yourself, your kit and get yourself in the right place. Fortunately, this week we have all the advice you and I need to get some great pictures.

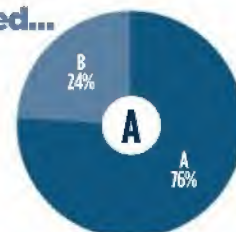
Our question of the week

In AP 18 July we asked...
Is there too much surveillance on our streets?

You answered...

A Yes 76%

B No 24%



This week we ask...

Which way would you prefer to photograph birds?

A Long lens from a distance

B Camera triggered from a distance

Vote online

www.amateurphotographer.co.uk

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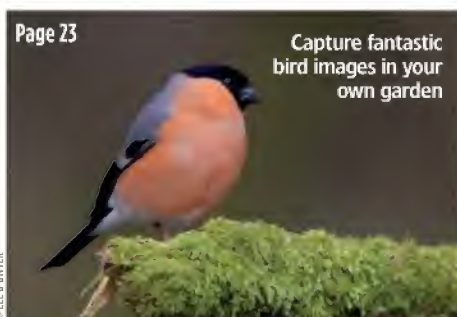


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Find out where to go to take great bird pictures

Send us your pictures

To have your pictures published in Gallery, send in a selection of up to ten images. They can be either a selection of different images or all have the same theme. Digital files sent on CD should be saved in a Photoshop-compatible format, such as JPEG or TIFF, with a contact sheet and submission form. Visit www.amateurphotographer.co.uk/apgallery for details. We cannot publish images without the necessary technical details. Each RGB image should be a minimum of 2480 pixels along its longest length. Transparencies and prints are also accepted. We recommend that transparencies are sent without glass mounts and posted via Special Delivery. For transparencies, prints or discs to be returned you must include an SAE with sufficient postage.



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© LEE O'DWYER

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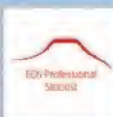
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News | Analysis | Comment | PhotoDiary 1/8/09

News

“We are very supportive of police efforts to tackle real criminals but this is beyond a joke”

Terror stop prompts snapper rage, page 7

Copyright fury sparks legal row | Wikipedia man responds to gallery threat

Wikipedia pics in copyright wrangle

WIKIPEDIA is embroiled in a legal row with the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) over claims that a Wikipedia volunteer breached UK copyright by uploading 'high-resolution' photos of the gallery's paintings.

The NPG threatened legal action over 3,300 images captured by one of the gallery's 'specialist' photographers hired to take pictures of paintings for the NPG website.

The gallery had hoped that revenue from sales of high-resolution images would help pay for its £1m digitisation project.

However, the gallery said it is 'very concerned' at the potential loss of licensing income and claims the files were taken without permission by Derrick Coetzee, a volunteer administrator for Wikipedia, a free-to-use online encyclopedia.

An NPG spokeswoman claimed that Coetzee was able to access the images

by circumventing restrictions it places on hi-res files.

The gallery said he did this using the NPG's own website software, which is supposed to allow people only to view, magnify and browse the photos that appear on the gallery's website. The NPG claims that by deconstructing the pictures, and then rebuilding them, Coetzee was able to download the high-resolution images.

Erik Moeller, deputy director for the Wikimedia Foundation – which operates Wikipedia – wrote in a blog: 'It seems obvious that a public benefit organisation and a volunteer community promoting free access to education and culture should be allies rather than adversaries.'

He added: 'Wikipedia has driven new traffic to the [NPG] archives, and more than 300 million monthly visitors to Wikipedia have been given free access to amazing photographs of historic value they would otherwise never have seen.'

As we went to press,



The National Trust's archive includes this painting of 19th century photography pioneer Julia-Margaret Cameron

Coetzee responded to the gallery ahead of the deadline it had set for legal action.

Though the gallery declined to reveal contents of Coetzee's response – issued through a lawyer's letter – an NPG spokeswoman confirmed that it received it before the gallery's deadline of 5pm on 20 July.

In a statement issued the following day, the NPG told AP: 'We wish to give this due consideration before

commenting further. The gallery will make a further announcement in due course once the situation is clearer.'

The NPG had demanded that the high-resolution images be 'permanently' removed from the Wikipedia website. Other demands, issued through the NPG's lawyer, Farrer & Co, included an undertaking to 'refrain in the future from circumventing the technical measures that our client uses to protect its copyright work.'

Responding to the legal threat, the Wikimedia Foundation – which is based in the US – had said: 'The Wikimedia Foundation does not control user behaviour, nor have we reviewed every action taken by that user.'

'Nonetheless, it is our general understanding that the user in question has behaved in accordance with our mission, with the general goal of making public domain materials available via our Wikimedia Commons project, and in accordance with applicable law.'

SNAP SHOT

D5000 warning

Nikon says that a 'small number' of D5000 digital SLRs may fail to switch on owing to a faulty component. Nikon has offered to repair the affected cameras free of charge. 'We are currently working on measures to resolve this issue,' said Nikon UK in a statement. For details visit <http://nikoneurope-en.custhelp.com/app>.

Production dips

Digital camera production plummeted 28.9% in the first five months of 2009, according to figures released by Japanese manufacturers. Though the number of digital SLRs made dropped 21.4%, compared to the same period the previous year, DSLR production in May was only down 3% on the same month in 2008. And DSLR shipments to Europe were 2.3% higher in May 2009 than in May 2008, state the figures released by the Camera & Imaging Products Association (CIPA).

Fuji's 3D digital camera primed

Fujifilm has confirmed a September launch for what it bills as the first three-dimensional digital camera that allows users to see 3D images without the need to wear special glasses. The ten-million-pixel FinePix Real 3D W1 camera creates two images, using two lenses, capturing them simultaneously at slightly different viewing angles. A UK price is yet to be announced. See future issues for more details.

Fujifilm forced into Pro 800Z U-turn

CALLS to save Fujicolor Pro 800Z forced Fujifilm to rethink its decision to axe the film, just days after the firm announced its demise.

Fujifilm had said it would stop making the colour negative film due to 'low sales volume'.

Billed as a high-speed, high-contrast film aimed at



portrait, wedding and fashion photographers, the ISO 800 emulsion comes in 35mm, 120 and 220 formats.

However, in a dramatic

U-turn, Fujifilm's Product manager for Professional Film, Russ Gunn, said: 'We have received many calls and emails from photographers who appreciate the natural skin tones and fine grain that Pro 800Z gives them.'

'Many people were genuinely upset about the withdrawal, so we have bowed to this pressure and decided

to continue production for the time being.'

In its previous statement, announcing the end of the film, Fujifilm had said: 'Sales of our colour negative and transparency films are doing very well and there has also been a recent upturn in sales of our instant films. We will continue to support photographers who appreciate the quality and flexibility of real film with a range of activities, including the Distinction Awards.'

PhotoDiary

A week of photographic opportunity

WEDNESDAY

29 JULY

EXHIBITION Water and Stone: Essence of Yorkshire by Joe Cornish until January 2010 at Lockwoods Restaurant, 83 North St, Ripon, North Yorks, HG4 1DP. Tel: 01765 607 555. Visit www.lockwoodsrestaurant.co.uk. **EXHIBITION** Hungry, featuring 'best emerging photographers' until 29 Aug at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Lichfield St, Wolverhampton WV1 1DU. Tel: 01902 552 055. Visit www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk.



© JOE CORNISH

THURSDAY

30 JULY

EXHIBITION Polaroids: Mapplethorpe until 13 September at Modern Art Oxford, 30 Pembroke St, Oxford OX1 1BP. Tel: 01865 722 733. Visit www.modernartoxford.org.uk. **EXHIBITION** Homeland by Nina Berman until 29 August at Side Gallery, 9 Side, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3JE. Tel: 0191 232 2208. Visit www.amber-online.com.

FRIDAY

31 JULY

EXHIBITION Foto8 Summer Show until 5 September at Foto8 Ltd, London EC1Y 0TH. Tel: 0207 253 8801. Visit www.foto8.com. **EXHIBITION** When You're a Boy, until 4 October at The Photographers' Gallery, London W1F 7LW. Tel: 0845 262 1618. Visit www.photonet.org.uk.

SATURDAY

1 AUGUST

EXHIBITION Masters of Vision, until 31 August, includes images by AP Editor Damien Demolder (who gives a talk at 2pm on 31 August) at Southwell Minster, Church St, Southwell, Notts NG25 0HD. Tel: 01636 812 649. Visit www.mastersofvision.co.uk. **DON'T MISS** Brighton Pride: Carnival Parade, starts on Madeira Drive, Brighton, East Sussex at 11am. Visit www.brightonpride.org. **DON'T MISS** National Eisteddfod of Wales at Rhiwlas Estate, near Bala, Gwynedd. Visit www.eisteddfod.org.uk.



© DAMIEN DEMOLDER

SUNDAY

2 AUGUST

EXHIBITION Pastoral Visions by Graham Ovenden until 18 October at Dimbola Lodge, Isle of Wight PO40 9QE. Tel: 01983 756 814. Visit www.dimbola.co.uk. **EXHIBITION** Les Rencontres d'Arles photography festival, exhibitions in Arles, France, until 13 September.

MONDAY

3 AUGUST

EXHIBITION Land of the Free by Steve Schofield until 8 August at BCA Gallery, 14 High St, Bedford MK40 1RN. Tel: 01234 818 670. Visit www.bedfordcreativearts.org.uk. **DON'T MISS** Robin Hood Festival until 9 August at Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre, Edwinstowe, Notts NG21 9HN. Tel: 01623 821 338. Visit www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk.

TUESDAY

4 AUGUST

EXHIBITION Gay Icons, until 18 October at National Portrait Gallery, London WC2H 0HE. Tel: 0207 312 2452. Visit www.npg.org.uk. **EXHIBITION** Music and Fashion, until 31 August at National Conservation Centre, Liverpool L1 6HZ. Visit www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk.

News

National Trust photos saved from axe

AROUND 2,000 photos have escaped being axed from a stock photography website after photographers claimed they did not breach the National Trust's rules on image use.

However, around 8,000 images have been pulled from the Alamy site following a review of the pictures by the photographers concerned.

Earlier this year the National Trust sent Alamy bosses a list of 10,000 pictures that the Trust believed may have breached its policy banning commercial use of photos taken at its properties.

Alamy then emailed the photographers to clarify the circumstances of image capture and removed pictures that breached the rules.

Alamy also removed pictures taken by photographers who had not responded to the email.

Images that were taken from a public highway or where the photographer had the Trust's permission were not deemed to have broken the regulations.

'We gave them [the photographers] a decent amount of time to come back,' said Alamy's head of content, Alan Capel. 'Quite a few got in touch to say I shouldn't have taken the picture,' he added.

Though 8,000 photos have been removed from the site, Capel said Alamy still holds the image files – along with the metadata – and any images subsequently deemed to have been legitimate will be reinstated.



© CHRIS LACEY

The National Trust gave AP permission to use this image in the magazine. Captured at Stourhead in Wiltshire, it was shot on National Trust-owned land

Chris Lacey, photographic manager at the National Trust Photo Library (NTPL), said he was not aware of the latest situation regarding Alamy, but confirmed that the two organisations have been speaking to each other.

Lacey repeated that any pictures taken on publicly accessible land do not break the Trust's rules, but those taken on private land do. 'Ninety-five per cent of

photographers affected have been absolutely fine with this,' said Lacey.

However, he added that there has been 'some confusion' among press photographers over their right to use images that the Trust has only given permission to shoot as part of a 'press story'.

He told us that images taken for this specific purpose should not subsequently go on sale via the Alamy website.

Autumn debut for 'Safari' D-Lux

SEPTEMBER will see the UK debut of a limited-edition 'Safari Green' version of Leica's D-Lux 4 digital compact. The Safari kit even includes a rain cape for 'photography out in the elements', says Leica.

Last year Leica released a 'Titanium' version of the 10.1-million-pixel camera, a model Leica billed as the 'son of M8' (the firm's digital rangefinder camera).

The camera features an f/2–2.8DC lens designed to deliver the 35mm viewing angle equivalent of a 24–60mm zoom.

The Leica D-Lux 4 Safari will cost £765. Visit www.leica-camera.co.uk for details.





Photo warning three years from 2012



Committed to defending your photographic rights!

PHOTOGRAPHERS hoping to take pictures of the Olympic construction site in East London have been warned they will be questioned if suspected of photographing 'security operations'.

The caution – three years this month until the event begins – came after an incident involving keen photographer Dr Patrick Green.

Dr Green said that security guards stopped him taking pictures from a public road that leads to the Olympic site. 'One guard also threatened to call more security who he said "would come with dogs"', said Dr Green, who was trying out a new Olympus E-30 DSLR at Dorset Place, E15, on 14 June.

'At first I didn't notice that there was a security guard in a cabin to the left of the barrier and took a few pictures,' said Dr Green. 'I then walked closer to get a better view. Next to the blue fence is what I assumed to be part of the Olympic Village construction and I wanted to

include that in my picture.'

The enthusiast, who was taking the pictures for a project, added: 'The guard saw me and called out that photography was forbidden... I said that I was on public land, I could take pictures if I wanted and that this had been confirmed by Olympics bosses in the past.'

A security manager later told Dr Green that he posed a 'security risk' because terrorists might use the images to plot an attack if the pictures are posted on the internet.

A spokeswoman for the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) said it appeared



© DR PATRICK GREEN

that the photographer was 'pointing the camera directly at the security operations and security guards'.

She told AP: 'Filming and photography of the site from public highways and areas

around the Olympic Park is permitted. However, our security guard team reserve the right to talk to anyone they believe may be taking photos or footage of any security operations.'



'Altered' images

'The New York Times' has accused a UK photographer of manipulating images, forcing it to remove photos from its website after detective work by a member of the public. Adam Gurno was browsing a slideshow of images captured by Bedford-based photographer Edgar Martins. Gurno claimed Martins had used image manipulation software to 'mirror' one side of a house shown in one of the pictures. After the outcry Martins told AP: 'I think the conversation merely needs to be refocused.'

Legend dead

Julius Shulman, praised for 'iconic images that defined architecture of the modernist era', has died aged 98. Shulman's career began after acquiring a Kodak Vest Pocket camera in 1936. Book publisher Benedikt Taschen described him as one of the greatest photographers of the 20th century: 'He was a generous, kind and caring human being with a memory as sharp as the latest generation of computers...'

Stolen Nikon gear recovered in police raid

TENS of thousands of pounds worth of top-of-the-range Nikon cameras that went missing in a fraud involving a fake BBC purchase order have been recovered.

City of London Police recovered four Nikon D3x cameras – worth £6,000 each – during a raid on a 'lock-up', according to Robert White Photographic, which reported the fraud last month.

The Dorset-based store lost the D3x gear alongside

four D3 camera bodies and four 14–24mm lenses (see AP 4 July).

Police say they seized camera kit worth £24,000 during the raid on a property in East London, but refused to reveal the location or say whether there have been any arrests as investigations continue.

However, AP understands that the raid is linked to another investigation running parallel to this operation.

In a separate move, the

D3 cameras and lenses have been returned to Robert White by another dealer who had bought the stolen gear from the fraudsters in good faith. A store spokeswoman confirmed that the serial numbers on all the equipment matches those of the stolen cameras.

The store praised the publicity generated by AP's coverage of the story in helping to recover the missing cameras. 'It got blanket coverage around the world. People in America were phoning us after seeing it on internet forums,' added the spokeswoman.

Robert White, which is based in Poole, had received a faxed purchase order,

purportedly from the BBC, and was told that a taxi would be sent to collect the gear because it was needed urgently. It was similar to ones it had received from the BBC in the past and appeared genuine. It later turned out that calls to a supplied contact extension number were being 're-directed to a mobile phone' and the taxi delivery address was an old BBC studio address.

Asked whether the store had learned any lessons from the experience, Robert White told us: 'Don't trust anybody.'

'With hindsight we should have made sure we received an original purchase order, not a faxed one, and then phoned the BBC to confirm.'



Committed to defending your photographic rights!

CLEVELAND Police have once again been accused of abusing their counter-terrorism powers after a newspaper photographer and reporter were stopped in a public area.

Cleveland Gazette photographer Peter Benn and reporter Joanna Desira were stopped and quizzed by Police Community Support

Press photographer caught in terror rap

Officers in Middlesbrough on 9 July.

The pair were asked for ID, prompting Benn to ask the PCSOs: 'Do I look like a terrorist?'

The paper's editor, Darren Thwaites, hit out at the police saying: 'We are very supportive of police efforts to tackle real criminals, but this is beyond a joke. Officers must

not be allowed to pervert an act that was designed to protect us against terrorism, into one that erodes people's civil liberties. There was no justification whatsoever for stopping our journalists from going about their lawful business.'

Assistant Chief Constable Sean White said that police have a right to ask for

identification to 'establish the purpose of those who might be involved in photography around crowded, built-up urban areas and public spaces, as part of its counter-terrorism strategy'.

Earlier this year the force said it will not hesitate to use anti-terrorism powers to quiz photographers taking pictures in public areas, though admitted most will have done nothing wrong.

Its policy statement followed controversy surrounding a man who was stopped while taking photographs of boats.

Leica winner scoops €5,000 prize

A SOUTH African photographer has won this year's Leica Oskar Barnack Award, claiming the €5,000 top prize.

Magnum photographer Mikhael Subotzky, 28, won with his portfolio of the South African town of Beaufort West (see photo right).

Swiss-born photographer Dominic Nahr came second and also claimed the best newcomer title.

Subotzky's previous awards include the Young Photographers Award at Perpignan, France, in 2007.

The winner can choose to receive €5,000 or Leica camera kit to the same value.



MIKHAEL SUBOTZKY



Police apology

Jewellery stolen during a photo shoot featuring the American actress Lindsay Lohan is now believed to be worth '£24,000', and not £250,000 as previously stated by London's Metropolitan Police. Apologising, a Met spokesman explained that police had accepted, in 'good faith', that the missing jewellery was worth £250,000 when it was reported stolen from a photo studio in Islington last month. He refused to say whether Lohan has been questioned as part of the Met's investigation.

Photo shock

An amateur photographer who took up the hobby a year ago has landed a Distinction from the Royal Photographic Society, according to a report in 'Rochdale Online'. Malcolm Joumeaux, who was awarded an LRPS, said: 'I had never entertained the idea of taking photos before. But a friend asked me to give it a try and I discovered I enjoyed it.'

Early pyramid photo sold

Images of Egypt dating from the 'early 1850s' have appeared at auction. Six unsigned 20x24cm salt prints, which include views of the pyramids and the Sphinx, sold for £1,350 as part of a Vintage Photography sale at Dominic Winter Book Auctions in Gloucestershire.

Rolleiflex maker on brink of closure

A HANDFUL of workers are clinging on to their jobs at Franke & Heidecke, the German maker of the famous Rolleiflex twin lens cameras, as closure looms and 119 staff are axed.

Among 16 staff still employed at the firm is Katrina Hartje, part of the company's sales administration team.

Speaking to AP, Katrina expressed shock at the demise of the 89-year-old firm, even though it filed for bankruptcy protection some four months ago. She said employees have not yet been told when the firm will close, but added: 'I think we will stop work at the end of this month [July].'

She said news of the firm's impending closure was delivered to staff on 30 June.

Franke & Heidecke was set up in 1920 by Reinhold Heidecke and Paul Franke. The company, based in Braunschweig, also made high-end 6x6cm digital cameras for Leaf and Sinar. Famous photographers favouring the legendary Rolleiflex film camera system included David Bailey and Helmut Newton.



SOMMER'S

Facebook photos breached rules

A NEWSPAPER'S publication of images depicting survivors of the Dunblane massacre – plucked from social networking websites – breached the press watchdog's code of conduct.

The Press Complaints Commission (PCC) ruled that the *Scottish Sunday Express* committed a 'serious error of judgement' by publishing photos of the survivors of the 1996 Dunblane shooting, even though the images and boys' identities were already in the public domain.

The newspaper report, on 8 March, claimed to show the boys, now teenagers, as 'foul-mouthed' youths who 'boast about sex, brawls and

drink-fuelled antics'.

The PCC said it is normally acceptable to publish images from social networking sites when the individual concerned has come to public attention 'as a result of their own actions, or are otherwise relevant to an incident currently in the news when they may expect to be the subject of some media scrutiny'.

However, the PCC ruled that the children had done nothing to warrant media scrutiny, and the images appeared to have been taken 'out of context and presented in a way that was designed to humiliate or embarrass them'.

ClubNews

AP's weekly round-up of club news from all over Britain

Thurrock Camera Club

Members say they are taking a summer break, but will be back for their first meeting of the new season on 1 September. The club welcomes anyone with an interest in photography for enjoyable and instructive evenings. Meetings take place at Cowdray Hall, London Road, West Thurrock, Essex. Visit www.thurrockcameraclub.org.uk.

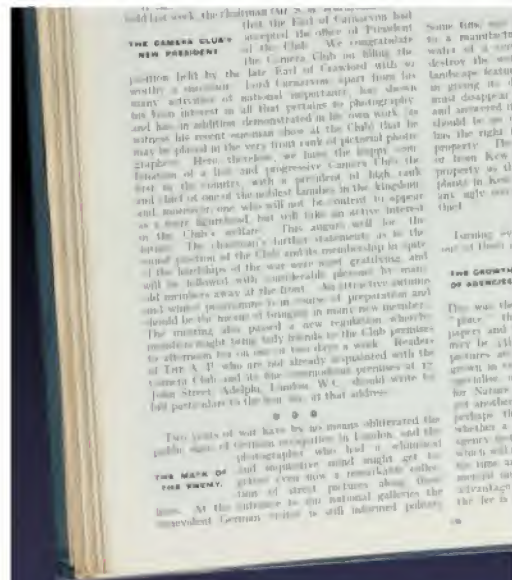
Brandon & District Photography Club

The club stages an exhibition of members' work and an open competition on 21 and 22 August at The Baptist Chapel Hall, High Street, Brandon, Suffolk. The show is open from 10am-4pm and is free to enter.

www.ourclubs.org

A new website aimed at clubs of all types has been launched at www.ourclubs.org. 'The idea is to give a web presence to clubs of all sizes even if they do not have the resources to develop a site of their own,' say its developers. The website plans to include news, events and host forum discussions.

Send club news to: apevents@ipcmedia.com



Amateur Photographer 1916

War against Germany provided photographers with ample opportunity to snap subjects that many would have regarded as inappropriate at the time, namely those featuring anything to do with the enemy. AP pointed out that signs of German products, for example, had by no means disappeared from view in London, two years into the war. '... the photographer who had a whimsical and inquisitive mind might get together even now a remarkable collection of street pictures...' suggested AP's article headlined 'The mark of the enemy'. A large sign outside a pub off the Strand still advertised 'Munich beers'. Another sign nearby promoted 'Pilseners', while at Charing Cross 'highly coloured pictures of Cologne' were on display.

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Brian W Matthews

Until 22 August. Bishop Auckland Town Hall, McGuinness Gallery, Market Place, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 7NP. Tel: 01388 602610. Open Mon to Fri 10am-4pm, Sat 9am-4pm. Admission free

You may remember the gruesome image of a vulture feasting on a caiman's eye when we featured Brian Matthews in AP 7 February. If you don't, we've included it again here. It was for this image that wildlife photographer Brian was awarded runner-up in last year's BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. While the vulture image may not be to everyone's taste – excuse the pun – there are plenty of other impressive, less stomach-turning wildlife images in Brian's portfolio. Hartlepool-based Brian has travelled to more than 35 countries and photographed a broad range of species, including orang-utans in Borneo, tigers in Corbett National Park in India and ospreys in Finland. A number of these, and also images of UK wildlife, are currently on display in his latest exhibition. **Gemma Padley**



© BRIAN MATTHEWS



Website

www.rspb-images.com

If it is bird images you are after, there is no better place to start your search than the RSPB picture library. The extensive collection of pictures includes UK bird species and bird photography from across the world. Every image is clearly displayed and captioned, and the site is bright, colourful and easy to use. On the homepage, there is a helpful 'Themes and Concepts' dropdown menu, which makes browsing straightforward and quick. Users can choose from a list of subjects including 'In-flight', 'Dawn and Dusk' and 'Cute and Cuddly'. The site also features photographer portfolios, including resident RSPB photographer Andy Hay and AP contributor Danny Green. Images of insects, mammals and plants also feature, so you may even pick up ideas for other areas of your photography. For information on how to submit images to the site, see the 'new photographer submissions' page under the 'About Us' heading. Whether you are browsing or buying, this picture library is a goldmine of images.

Gemma Padley



Book review



© YVES-JACQUES REY-MILLET

A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Jamaica is the latest in a range of handy little bird identification guides from A&C Black, a range which also includes guides to European seabirds and Mediterranean fowl, among others. For such a small island, Jamaica has an amazing number of bird species – it is home to more than 300 – and has become an increasingly popular holiday destination for avid bird photographers. This guide, as well as past titles like the *Flight Identifications of European Seabirds*, offers a concise photographic biography of each species, with text explaining the behaviour, habitat, mating and feeding patterns of the birds. If Jamaica or Europe don't top your holiday list, the publisher has a book for just about every photo location. You can also find a range of technique guides and tutorials, such as the handy *RSPB Guide to Digital Wildlife Photography*, for those looking to improve their skills and learn how to meter or focus on birds in flight, for instance. Visit the publisher's website at www.acblack.com and check out its full range of titles, which are currently available at a 10% discount at the time of writing. **Jeff Meyer**



A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Jamaica

By Ann Haynes-Sutton, Audrey Downer & Robert Sutton
Photography by Yves-Jacques Rey-Millet
A&C Black, paperback, 304 pages, £24.99, ISBN 978-1408107430

Flight Identifications of European Seabirds

Anders Blomdahl, Bertil Breife, Niklas Holmstrom
A&C Black, paperback, 374 pages, £22.49, ISBN 978-0-7136-8616-6

RSPB Guide to Digital Wildlife Photography

David Tipling
A&C Black, paperback, 160 pages, £19.99, ISBN 978-0-7136-7185-8



Book review

Creative Bird Photography

By Bill Coster

New Holland Publishers, hardback, 160 pages, £19.99, ISBN 978-1-84773-509-6



Shooting birds is one of the most challenging types of wildlife photography. For starters, they're often nowhere near your camera. They don't stay in one place for very long. They move too quickly to focus. And getting the right exposure when set against a bright, blue sky can seem nigh on impossible.

In his new guide, Bill Coster takes you through some of the common obstacles and offers his remedies. It is practical advice, but most useful are the compositional tips. It's here that the book lives up to its name. Coster explains the key moments in

birds' day-to-day lives, such as passing food from one to another, mating, courtship and, of course, flying, and offers his suggestions on how you can get dynamic shots. A tight frame from a high angle works best for bathing birds, he argues, while using motion blur on foliage in a background can emphasise the clutter of a bird's

habitat. Coster isn't afraid to contradict the rules of composition, which is great advice for anyone who wants to be more creative with their wildlife photography. Jeff Meyer



Letters

Share your views and opinions with fellow AP readers every week



KEITH HUGHES

Letter of the Week

Getting down low

I have been catching up on a number of back issues of AP and fully agree with the comments by AP Editor Damien Demolder in AP 30 May regarding 'shooting from another angle'.

I very much enjoy trying to get a new 'angle' on the pictures I take, and I have included one where I got down flat on the ground, lying on my tummy. I am pleased with the result and hope it will be worthy of space in AP.

There is only one problem about 'getting down to it' and that is at my age. As a 79-year-old pensioner, I have trouble getting back up again!

Keith Hughes, Surrey

What rubbish!

In reply to Jan Enkelmann's letter, 'Boiling point' in AP 18 July, in which he comments on my letter, 'Health and safety' (AP 4 July), I take exception to his implication that I raised a trivial point and that my 'mindset', as he puts it, in some way would encourage more government interference and legislation affecting the freedom of photographers.

This is total rubbish. I didn't see 'potential danger in even the most innocent of settings'; my sole intention in writing a letter was to draw attention to the dangerous situation the two little boys were in, so photographers would think more about potential dangers when composing a shot featuring young children – nothing more.

Mr Enkelmann was right in saying I had no idea what instructions about the potential dangers of touching the machine the little boys were given. However, I believe any parent reading this would agree that young children don't always do as they are told. These children should not have been placed in a position where they had the option to disobey the parental instruction; the consequences would have been too horrific to contemplate.

He also writes that 'there seem to be other people standing by (the photographer among them)', yet the shot shows only the back of someone's legs, looking in the other direction, about 12 feet away. As for the photographer, well, he was taking the shot – hardly adequate supervision.

We don't need to encourage more legislation for this situation; legal obligation already exists, and it applies equally to the operator of the machine and the guardians of the children. It's known as duty of care. My letter made his blood boil, did it? Well, that is a pity.

Terry Clewes, Staffordshire



ROB DEYES

Flying high

I have been playing around with a kite and hanging a Ricoh R4 underneath for a couple of years now. While I was taking the above shot I thought of you – maybe it will lift your day!

Rob Deyes, Hull

Keeping it steady

Regarding the Olympus Pen E-P1, you talk in your review (AP 18 July) of a traditionalist baulking at the lack of viewfinder and built-in flash. Well, I think most traditionalist like myself are far happier with a hotshoe than a small and potentially ineffective built-in flash. The lack of viewfinder, however, is another matter, and one I think you are way too dismissive of. Holding a camera at arm's length can never be as stable as the grip used when using a viewfinder, and I would be loath to spend in excess of £600 on a camera that is at a disadvantage in being able to provide sharp, shake-free shots before I even switch it on.

This is a great shame because the E-P1 is a gorgeous-looking piece of kit and I doubt that it would have been any less stunning with that all important built-in viewfinder.

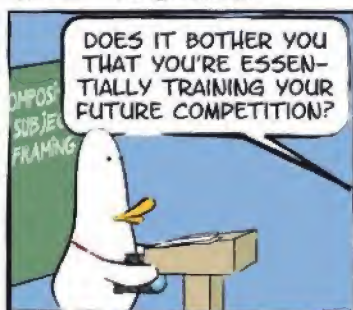
Nigel Cliff, West Midlands



Letter of the week

wins a 20-roll pack of 36-exposure Fujifilm Superia ISO 200 print film or a Fujifilm 2GB media card (in a choice of CompactFlash, SD, xD or Memory Stick)*. The sender of every letter published receives a free roll of Fujifilm Superia ISO 200 36-exposure film worth £4.99

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* Please indicate whether you would like to receive Fujifilm film or a memory card (please state type preferred) and include your full postal address

Summary contradiction

I read Geoffrey Crawley's excellent article about image formation (AP 18 July) with interest. However, his summary contradicts the earlier parts of his article in that he states that film is an analogue medium.

Geoffrey writes that the incidence of light on a silver salt crystal alters its composition in such a way that it will decompose to metallic silver when subjected to a developer. Each crystal in the lattice thus represents a bistable and is analogous to a bit.

Graham Sumner, Lancashire

Although each crystal is a photoconductive unit, the density of final silver generated is continuously variable according to the strength of the incident light. There is no 'yes/no' option, so it is best regarded as an analogue process, I suggest – Geoffrey Crawley, photo-science consultant

Lack of focus

My routine trip to the supermarket became more exciting when I spotted AP's front cover featuring a review of the long-awaited Olympus Pen E-P1 (AP 18 July). However, excitement turned to disappointment as I read the review. 'It's not a compact.

It's not an SLR. It's a Pen' reads the strap line. So who, then, is this highly priced, non-conformist newcomer aimed at?

No flash, no viewfinder and £600 for the body alone makes this package close on £1,000 when adding in the extras to have a fully usable system. Then, by the time I have packed all the extras in a bag, I might as well have taken my DSLR in the first place, which Olympus has already made pretty small anyway!

The lack of focus in determining the role of this camera and where it fits into the market makes it look like a self-indulgent trip down memory lane to re-live former glory. Sure, the Pen was once a landmark product in what was then a much less competitive market, and at a time when building things small was a miracle, but time has moved on and many buyers today won't remember the Pen and won't really care anyway.

Don't get me wrong, I'm an enthusiast of the brand, having owned four Olympus cameras, and currently using two. I had hoped to find good reason for adding an E-P1 to my kit as a third, for those trips when I want to travel light but still have a more competent camera than a simple compact. However, I would find difficulty in justifying the expenditure in these difficult times, especially when the review flagged up a number of shortcomings that resulted in a mediocre score of just 79% with hopes that there will be a firmware update in the future, control positioning deemed 'disappointing' and a score of just 6/10 for focusing, which surely should equally apply to the company for being so out of focus with the target customers.

Sorry, Olympus, but after waiting all this time it's the Canon PowerShot G10 for me, at a far more affordable price, even if I can't swap lenses. At least I will have a viewfinder and a built-in flash. It's a brave company that goes against the mainstream market, so please, Olympus, don't stop innovating; just be sure that the end result is fully focused. **David Woodnutt, Buckinghamshire**



Well done!

As a regular reader, can I congratulate you on the *Unofficial wedding photographer* issue (AP 11 July) as being first rate. It was full of gems and constructive ideas, well set out and very refreshing – just the ticket, 10/10! **John K Prosser, Kent**



Back Chat

AP reader **Richard Steele-Perkins** recalls some of the disastrous wedding shoots he has witnessed

AS A RETIRED Church of England Minister with a wife who is ordained and still in full-time ministry, Steve Smith's 'Backchat' column in AP 11 July reminded us of a few horror stories regarding the antics of a thankfully small number of wedding photographers.

While most photographers we have met have been excellent, we have both had to grapple with some dreadful ones over the years. We believe that it is important that the photographer sees the vicar before the service to find out exactly what is and is not allowed. Not only is this good manners, but it also establishes a working relationship that can benefit both parties. Only recently my wife asked a photographer to remain at the back of the church during the service and to refrain from using flash. She told him that he could photograph the couple during the signing of the register and afterwards as they came down the aisle. However, he completely ignored her instructions and went running around all over the church, taking photographs and poking his camera into the faces of the bride and groom. Needless to say, my wife wrote to him afterwards and told him that he had been blacklisted and would

While most photographers we have met have been excellent, we have both had to grapple with some dreadful ones

never again be allowed to take photographs at any wedding for which she was responsible.

Like Steve, I too can recall some real photographic disasters. There was one wedding I conducted some years ago where there were almost as many pictures of the vintage car in which the bride and groom arrived as

of the couple themselves. The bride's father was incensed! More recently, I attended a wedding where the bride's uncle had offered to photograph the happy couple with a camera he hadn't used for some time and which, as it turned out, wasn't working properly. To crown it all, he went to sleep in the church porch during the service and I had to wake him up in time to photograph them as they signed the register in the vestry. Recently, somebody showed me some awful efforts that were taken at their daughter's wedding. Without exception they were badly underexposed and out of focus, and to add insult to injury the 'professional' was demanding £900.

I have been the official photographer at quite a number of weddings and have always made certain that the couple know I am an amateur who only charges enough to cover costs. I would advise any couple looking for a wedding photographer to ask to see some of their work and, if possible, to speak to another couple who have previously employed them. If they do this they can be sure that their wedding photographs will adequately reflect their special day.

Your thoughts or views (about 500 words) should be sent to 'Backchat' at the usual AP address (see page 3). A fee of £50 will be paid on publication

Photo Insight

Amateur
Photographer
Technique

TOM MACKIE
EXPLAINS HOW HE
USED A TELEPHOTO
LENS TO COMPRESS
SHAPE AND FORM
IN THIS STRIKING
VIEW OF THE CITY
OF ARTS AND
SCIENCES BUILDING
IN VALENCIA, SPAIN

The AP experts

Each week, one of our team of experts of Steve Bloom, David Clapp, Tom Mackie and Clive Nichols will reveal the secrets behind one of their great images. This week it's Tom Mackie

TOM MACKIE Architecture

As an internationally respected architectural photographer, Tom brings a wealth of experience to AP

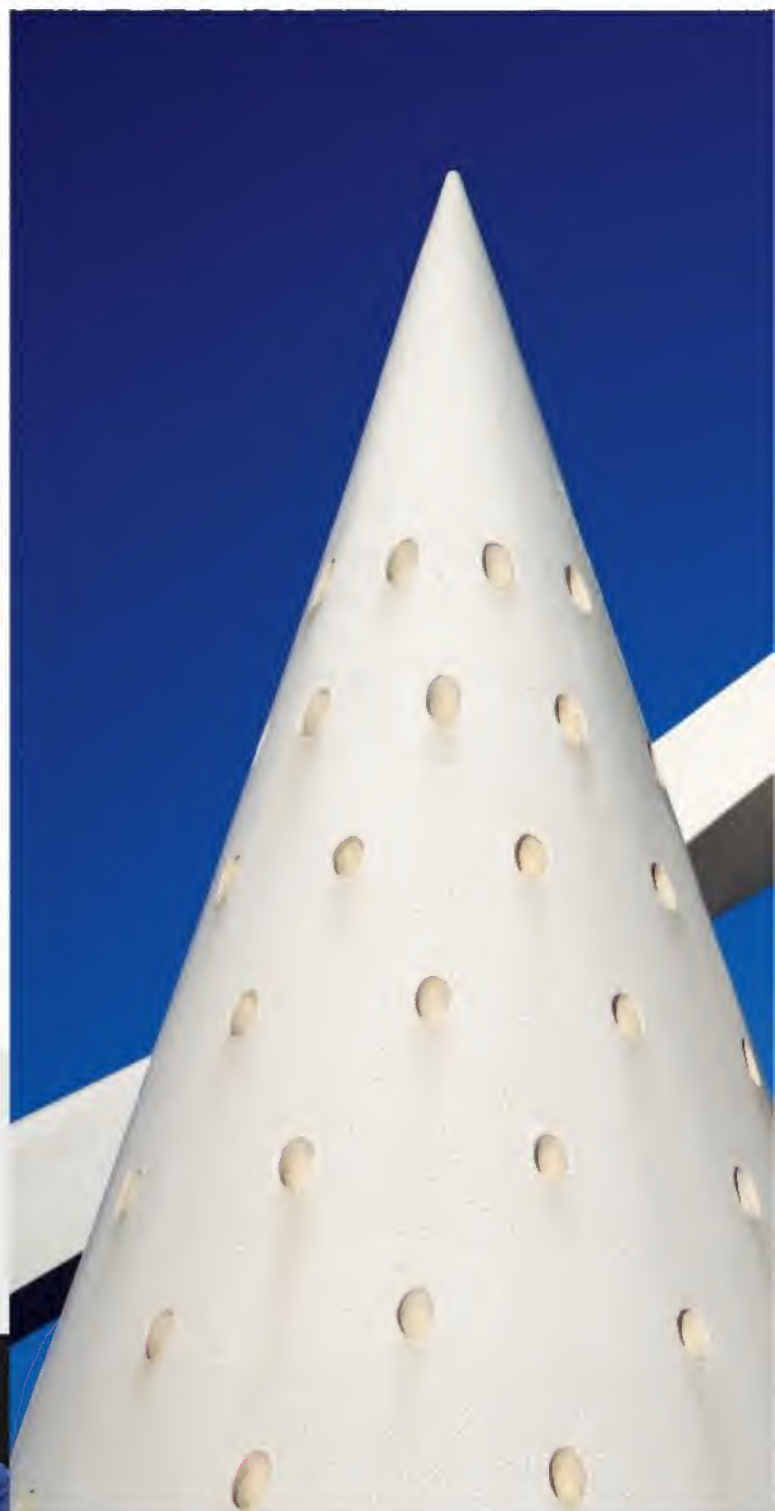


WHEN I first saw the City of Arts and Sciences building, I thought it was an incredible design. I knew straightaway I had to photograph it. The entertainment complex is a series of buildings situated at the end of the Turia riverbed in Valencia, Spain. Designed by Santiago Calatrava and Félix Candela, construction on the site began in 1996, and the entire complex was completed in 2005. This is a section of the El Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia opera house.

The first time I visited the complex, only part of the structure was finished and there were people working on the building. I came back a couple of years later when it was complete, and I've been back three or four times since.

The unique thing about the buildings, and this part of the site in particular, is that there are so many different things you can photograph. There are a number of interesting shapes that can be juxtaposed against each other.

My intention was to fill the frame with eye-catching graphical shapes. I wanted to bring the two buildings – the cone on the left and triangle roof on the right – close together to create a composition using only the abstract shapes. Rather than show the building in its entirety, I wanted to concentrate on the detail and produce an image that would be completely different from an image of the whole building. I walked around the complex, noting down shooting angles, and came back once I had decided the most suitable



“I wanted to concentrate on the detail and produce an image that would be completely different from an image of the whole building”

time of day to capture the shot I wanted. I decided to use my Canon EOS 5D with a 70-200mm lens to compress the shapes in the frame and create a sleek graphical design. I wouldn't have been able to get the same effect with a wideangle lens.

Deciding which shapes to include in the frame is like playing with building blocks when you were a child. Just as children put together different shaped building blocks – triangles, rectangles and cones, for example – the process of creating a composition with graphical shapes is exactly the same. Mentally, you select which shapes will fit together and then use your camera and lens to execute the composition.

I took this image early in the morning. I do most of my shoots first



thing in the morning and last thing in the evening when the light is at its most suitable. During the day, the light can be flat and you don't get the mottling effect on the buildings. I chose to take this image in the winter because the sun was lower in the sky. You get more mottling from the light at this time of year because it is not so bright and stark.

I was careful not to underexpose when the sunlight hit the white structure. I used my in-camera matrix metering to ensure my exposure was spot on (see *Talking technique*). I wanted to get both subjects sharp, so I used an aperture of $f/13$ and a shutter speed of $1/60\text{sec}$. I always use a tripod, and for this image I used ISO 100 and auto white balance. **AP**

Tom Mackie is holding an architectural workshop in Norwich, Norfolk, on 24 August 2009. For more information visit www.tommackie.com/workshops/workshop.php?id=107. To see more images by Tom visit www.tommackie.com.

Talking technique

One of the benefits of digital SLRs is the in-camera metering. I've photographed this building in the past using a large-format camera and spot meter, but with digital imaging you don't have to rely on working out your exposure manually. The process of calculating exposure is taken away so you can concentrate on the actual composition.

In-camera matrix metering in digital cameras has become so good that the exposure is usually accurate. Occasionally, however, the images are underexposed or have burnt-out highlights, and in these instances you have to compensate.

For this image, I took an initial shot and looked at the histogram to check my exposure. I underexposed slightly to ensure I retained detail in the highlights.

The key is not to rely too much on what you see on the screen, but to look at your histogram instead. In bright sunlight it can be difficult to see highlight detail, so I check the histogram to make sure I haven't lost any detail.

I also used a polariser to bring out the deep blue of the sky, but you have to be careful not to over-polarise. A heavily polarised sky can become black, especially in clear, bright skies. When I'm using a polariser I check to see whether the sky is too dark and reduce the polarisation if necessary.

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Not just common or garden

Local parks, woodland and lakes are home to an abundance of British birds.

Paul Hobson shares a few simple techniques to capture imaginative bird images in your neighbourhood. **Gemma Padley** reports

Paul photographed into the sun to create this semi-silhouetted image of a tern

FROM ducks to jays, robins and nuthatches, the British countryside is buzzing with birds. While photographic holidays to far-flung destinations in search of rare species may offer wonderful photographic opportunities, it is equally possible to capture exciting bird images without travelling far from home. Wildlife photographer Paul Hobson has been photographing British birds for 16 years. In that time he has amassed an arsenal of tricks and trade secrets for creating eye-catching, original images. Pockets of greenery in urban spaces and snatches of woodland are goldmines for photographing birds, he says – you just have to know where to look.

'Start by visiting nearby parks and public gardens,' says Paul. 'Well-walked rivers and woodlands are also worth exploring. If you look for places where birds are confident

around humans, you can get close to them without them flying away. Shooting birds in a local environment means you don't have to worry about using long telephoto lenses or a hide. You also won't have to crawl through thick undergrowth or lie in bushes for hours because the birds are already there.'

The trick is to find places where there are lots of birds in one area. 'If you're in a public park, look for people having picnics,' says Paul. 'You'll often find robins and chaffinches bobbing around. People feeding ducks on lakes are good because you can get really close, and once you're there you can photograph all sorts of water birds. You want to find places where you don't have to wait for birds to appear. I have a stock of places in my mind where I know groups of birds will be at specific times of the year. Sea bird colonies such as Bempton Cliffs nature reserve in North





Yorkshire and the Farne Islands in Northumberland are good for flocks of birds, and Abbotsbury Swannery in Dorset is great for swans.'

Preliminary research and an understanding of birds' behaviour are useful, adds Paul. 'A bird will behave differently depending on the time of year, so planning when to take your shots is important. If you want a robin singing in the park, March or April is a good time to capture this. Likewise, if you want swans or coots fighting on the water, spring is the best time because the aggression levels are high. Keep going back regularly to a place and watch how the birds behave. Take your time when approaching the birds and try not to make sudden movements.'

On a typical trip, Paul takes his Canon EOS 1D Mark III and a 300mm lens with

a 1.4x converter, a tripod, a plastic mat for lying on and a beanbag for his camera. 'If you don't have a 300mm lens, a 70-200mm zoom is a good alternative,' he says. 'The lens you use will obviously determine the type of image you are going to get, so think about the shots you want before you set off. It is a good idea to approach a photo trip with the intention of capturing a specific shot and sticking at it until you have the shot you are happy with. If you go to a location with lots of lenses and many different ideas, you may end up with a lot of competent images but no really good ones. Don't try to achieve everything at once. It will probably take several visits to build up a portfolio of shots you are really pleased with. If you choose a nearby location, you can go back another day and concentrate on something different.'

Try coming in close on your subject to capture detail in a beak or feathers

Choosing a background

Working in aperture priority mode, Paul looks to see how close the bird is to the background and decides how much depth of field he wants in his image. 'If you want to minimise distracting details and make the bird stand out, you'll need a wide aperture, perhaps $f/5.6$,' he says. 'Vertical background lines such as trees or fences that form strong patterns are particularly distracting.'

'In the two great spotted woodpecker shots, the image immediately below was taken at $f/8$ and the bottom image at $f/5.6$. The background is more obvious in the top image and it looks a little cluttered. If you want to show the bird's surroundings you'll need to stop down to increase your depth of field, but think carefully about your background before you do this. If your camera has a depth of field preview button, use this to assess the scene. Try different f-stops and see what results you get.'



ALL PICTURES © PAUL HOBSON

Paul also takes a selection of grains, seeds and nuts with him. 'Ducks and geese are likely to swim straight to you because they are used to being fed, but for birds such as robins and jays you may have to scatter nuts or seeds,' he says. 'Sunflower seeds and peanuts are always popular with small birds, and robins love mealworms. For birds on water, grains such as wheat or barley are ideal.'

Choosing when to take your shots is an important decision. While early mornings and evenings are traditionally the times when the light is at its most pleasing, this doesn't mean you can't shoot during the day, says Paul. 'I took some shots of swans in bright daylight recently and was pleased by my DSLR camera's ability to give a correctly exposed images,' he says. 'I always use evaluative metering and I check my exposure on the histogram. If you do this,

Paul used a shutter speed of $1/2000\text{sec}$ to freeze the movement of this Canada goose as it skimmed across the water

you can see if you need to compensate by adding or taking away a stop. This is especially important for white swans where there is a danger of burning out highlights.'

Once Paul has found a spot with lots of birds, he thinks about how best to frame his composition. 'If you are near a pond and want to show a bird's surroundings you would use a wideangle lens, but it's also worth trying more tightly framed shots. In my swan images, I tightly cropped the subject to focus attention on the brightly coloured beak.' Paul uses predictive autofocus and fine-tunes his focusing manually. 'If you aren't getting the shot you want from one angle, try another,' he adds. 'Sometimes it's worth lying down and positioning your camera so it is at the bird's eye level. If you can do this it will give your images a level of intimacy.' **AP**

Experimenting with shutter speeds

'One quick and easy way to get creative effects is to alter your shutter speed,' says Paul. 'I shot this scene using fast and slow shutter speeds to show the mallard splashing around in the water. If you use a small f-stop and a fast shutter speed of $1/500\text{sec}$ or $1/1000\text{sec}$, for example, it will freeze the water and you get lots of raindrop effects. If you are near a fast-flowing river, try using a slow shutter speed such as $1/30\text{sec}$ or $1/20\text{sec}$ to show the motion in the water. Your subject won't be razor sharp, but the water will take on a beautiful silky, flowing look.'



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Although preferring insects, the long-tailed tit will feed on seeds in autumn and winter
Canon EOS 1D Mark II,
400mm, 1/800sec at
f/8, ISO 400



Feed the birds



If you want to photograph Britain's diverse bird population, you don't have to venture far from home. **Lee O'Dwyer** tells **Jeff Meyer** that with the right feed, some rough carpentry and a little patience, you can capture dynamic bird pictures in your own garden

BIRDS aren't as fussy as popular culture would have us believe. They'll land and perch on just about anything so long as there's food involved. Lee O'Dwyer, a waste management engineer (see AP 31 January) should know. For 30 years he's been photographing wildlife, with a speciality in birds, and over the years he has developed his own technique for luring a wide range of birds to

a perch in front of a garden shed where he sits in wait with his Canon EOS 1D Mark II.

"Anyone can do it," Lee insists. "You only need a few materials to make a feeding station, and it doesn't cost very much money. Before you construct anything, though, you need to think about what sorts of birds you want to attract and then buy your feed."

Mixed birdseed will bring most species into your garden, Lee says, and for about

£20 you can pick up a sack at your local garden centre that will last all winter. Other birds like goldfinches, Lee's favourite species to photograph, prefer niger seed, while bullfinches eat black sunflower seeds. You can also buy fat balls – coconut shells stuffed with fat and seeds – and large bags of peanuts at pet stores and supermarkets to draw other types of birds. Lee says he likes to use fat



Bullfinches will feed on the buds of various trees in spring, particularly fruit crops

Canon EOS 1D Mark II, 560mm, 1/320sec at f/7, ISO 400



balls because their weight means a bird cannot pick them up and fly away with them. It has to sit there and eat the fat within range of his camera.

Once you have your food, it's time to build your feeding station. All you need is a piece of timber about 4ft (1.2m) high, a piece of plywood about 12in (30cm) square, some 1x1in (2.5x2.5cm) edging to go around the

plywood to prevent spillage, and something solid, like a concrete block, to serve as a stand.

'When you've put the edging around the table, you should have what looks like a very large tray,' says Lee. 'Stand this up in your garden and cover it with food. It's amazing how soon the birds will find it. If you have birds in the garden already, they will start turning up in numbers quite quickly. Certainly within

about two weeks you can expect a lot of birds crowding around your table to feed.'

It's at this point, when you're confident you can expect a throng of birds each day, that you should take the table away. Lee opts for a 4in (10cm) square table constructed similarly to the larger tray – only this time he drills small holes in the corner and attaches a perch. When the multitude of hungry birds

The dunnock prefers well-vegetated areas with brambles and hedges
Canon EOS 1D Mark II, 560mm, 1/320sec at f/8, ISO 400

Amateur Photographer Top tip



Making the perches

Lee prefers perches that look natural and have a seasonal theme. In spring and summer he uses branches with fresh blossoms or buds. During winter, Lee chooses a nice thin perch and sprays it with water, then leaves it outside all night. In the morning it will be covered with frost, giving you a nice wintry picture that tells you the season.

If you have a big garden, try finding a rotten stump about 4ft (1.2m) high or a piece of birch. Drill a hole in the side about 1in (2.5cm) in diameter and stuff it with suet or fat, then position it so the hole is facing away from you on the back of the stump. This will attract woodpeckers and give you the opportunity to take a classic profile shot while they eat.

Jays also like to prise nuts from rotted branches and tree stumps. Lee will take the plastic top off an aerosol can and nail it to the back of the stump near the top. The jay will land on the top of the stump and take nuts from the container, which is out of sight. Because jays are larger birds, Lee suggests placing your table twice the distance away because they won't fit in your frame at the focal length you're using for most other birds.

Though it's a little clichéd now, Lee says old watering cans and spade handles can make for attractive perches. Some of the easiest birds to lure to your garden are robins and blue tits, and these will often perch on all types of objects while waiting to feed.



The goldfinch's long fine beak allows it to extract seeds from thistles and teasels
Canon EOS 1D Mark II, 280mm, 1/200sec at f/5.7, ISO 400



Lee's garden shed/hide and small bird table

Amateur Photographer
Top tip

The best time of year for birds

Seed, fat, suet and all the other avian delicacies you find at garden centres and pet stores are actually not the birds' first choice of cuisine. Birds prefer insects, says Lee, and from spring through the peak of summer you won't get large crowds of birds loitering in your garden. As summer wanes and temperatures cool, however, insects start to die off. Birds then seek other means, such as seeds and fat balls. By autumn and winter, you can expect a throng of birds.

Watch out for...

Magpies and pheasants. These birds are quite greedy, Lee warns, and lack the etiquette of other species. Quite often you will find them on your bird table gorging until all the food has gone.

come to feed and see only that small pile of food in a space big enough for just two birds at a time, the other diners will land on the perch and politely wait their turn.

'This is where it gets tricky,' says Lee. 'You've got to position the table and perch correctly so that the sun is behind you, otherwise you'll get flare. For instance, in the winter, which is my favourite time to shoot, the sun rises over

my right shoulder and sets under my left.

'You also need to think about your background,' he adds. 'After all the effort and waiting around, you don't want to look at your pictures later and see a cable or branch running through your frame. Generally, you'll want to use a longer focal length to blow out the background. I use a 300-500mm lens to get this effect. You can also position your

perches so they are as far away from your background as possible, which gives you a nice uniformity of colour in the background.'

Another consideration when creating your tables and perches is height. This will be different for everyone and depends from where you plan to shoot. Lee has converted a garden shed into a hide by cutting a slot into the wall about 12in (30cm) high by 3ft (0.9m) wide, and he sits in there with a tripod waiting for birds to arrive. Before he sets up his bird table and perch, he practises framing a few shots from his shed.

Height depends on where you're shooting from and what your background is. If you have a large lawn and your table is 3ft (0.9m) high, you'll want to shoot from about 4ft (1.2m) high to give you a nice uniform background of grass, says Lee. Conversely, if you have conifers and a table about 5ft (1.5m) high, you'll want to shoot from about that same level or slightly lower to be able to get an impression of the trees.

Finally, you want to put your perch on the farthest side of the small food table from where you are sitting so that the bird is looking at the food and towards you. 'Occasionally they move around and face the other way, but generally they follow your lead,' says Lee. 'Your biggest obstacle is the discomfort. You could be in your hide for three or four hours, and you don't want to be fidgeting. So take a flask if it's cold and bring a comfortable chair. As temperatures drop, it can get really cold in there. Your best tool is your patience.' **AP**



The nuthatch is resident in England and Wales, with occasional sightings in Scotland
Canon EOS 1D Mark II, 280mm, 1/250sec at f/5.7, ISO 400

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It is somewhat fitting, then, that this month marks the launch of our Bold Colour round of APOY, and we ask you to celebrate the richness and diversity of the many colours around you – at this time of year, more than ever.

On the following pages we have offered some tips and techniques to help you get started. With such a wide range of possibilities to choose from, we hope to see a full and diverse group of images this month. Judging by what we've seen in the rounds so far, we're sure we will.

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Round 7

Bold Colour

With a summer heatwave under our belts and all the beautiful flowers in full bloom, there is perhaps no better time for our Bold Colour round of APOY. Unlike all those dull days during the year that we suffer, this is the month for you to forget about monochrome conversion and concentrate on the world of colour.

There are many picture opportunities out there for you to consider. For instance, if you live near the seaside you might wish to photograph a sunset over the beach or fields of purple heather. Macro lovers may find bold colour on the backs of ladybirds or within the inner depths of flowers. Even portraiture affords a wide range of possibilities in the types of dress and locations you choose for your subjects.

One thing to remember before you get started is that while bright midday sunlight can produce intense colours, it tends to wash out the lighter colours in your highlight areas. Waiting for the golden hours of early morning and late afternoon will ensure richer colours all around. For more tips on capturing strong colours, see our suggestions on the right.

Plan your APOY year

Below is a list of this year's rounds, a synopsis of what we're looking for and the dates they will be announced. When you are planning your entries for each round, remember to take into consideration the criteria of fulfilling the brief, creativity and technical excellence on which you will be judged.

Theme	Synopsis	Announced	Closes	Results
Leading Lines	Lead me in	14 Feb	6 March	28 March
On The Street	Candid life	7 March	27 March	25 April
Outdoor Portrait	Get out of the house	4 April	30 April	30 May
Plant Life	Artful vegetation	2 May	29 May	27 June
H ₂ O	Features and functions	6 June	26 June	25 July
Looking Closer	The finer details	4 July	24 July	29 Aug
Bold Colour	Complements and clashes	1 Aug	28 Aug	26 Sept
Reflection	Double or nothing	5 Sept	25 Sept	31 Oct
From A Low Angle	New views from the ground up	3 Oct	30 Oct	28 Nov
Low Light	Inside or out	7 Nov	27 Nov	19 Dec



GORDON GIBSON

Saturation

Everyone wants bold colour, but sometimes what we see in our hanging baskets and countryside walks fails to reproduce in print. The temptation is to increase the vibrancy of your colours by pulling the saturation slider far to the right, but there is a fine line to tread. Too much saturation looks false. To get a more balanced effect, such as with these apples, create an Adjustment Layer and increase your saturation. Then adjust the opacity slider at the top of your Layers palette to fine-tune the overall effect it will have on your image.



JEFF MEYER

Use a single colour

This Italian piazza is dominated by its red brick paving stones and facades. On its own, your eye can get lost searching for a point of interest. By framing this couple in the foreground, however, the striking teal colour of the woman's outfit breaks up the scene and gives the eye an immediate point of interest. If you're in a green landscape or grey urban environment, try looking for a strong isolated colour that you can include in your composition to create a focal point.

Exposure

A sure-fire way of capturing rich, saturated tones is to underexpose an image by anywhere up to a full stop. This works particularly well with skies, making the blue stronger, but it's also quite effective with portraiture. In strong summer sun, skin tones can be difficult to capture without bleaching them out. Move dose and meter from your subject's skin, then try stopping down by a third. Lock that exposure and then recompose and shoot. You'll find that you not only get pleasing skin tones, but richness in your primary colours as well.



JEFF MEYER

1st prize

Our first-place winner will receive Canon's new 15.1MP EOS 500D standard kit, worth £1,399.99. The lucky winner will benefit from continuous shooting at up to 3.4fps with up to 170 JPEG burst, as well as nine-point AF and a high ISO up to 12800, making it ideal for low-light conditions. It also boasts a 3in Clear View LCD with Live View mode and the ability to record High Definition videos. Included in the kit is Canon's EF-S 18-200mm f/3.5-5.6 IS lens. With a zoom range of 11x, four-stop Image Stabilizer, it is the perfect all-rounder.



Worth
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RRP

2nd prize

Our second-place winner will receive Canon's PowerShot SX10 IS compact camera, worth £399. The ten-megapixel PowerShot SX10 IS features a 20x wideangle zoom with optical Image Stabilizer, for great telephoto performance. The SX10 IS also boasts a 2.5in vari-angle LCD, full manual mode and DIGIC 4, as well as Advanced Face Detection and anti-blur technology.



Worth
£399
RRP

3rd prize

A Canon PIXMA MP630 printer, worth £179, goes to our third-place winner. Boasting 9600x2400dpi and 1pl photolab-quality prints, the PIXMA MP630 uses five single inks and can produce a 10x15cm borderless photo in around 20 seconds. Other features include a 6.2cm colour TFT display with Easy-Scroll Wheel, a 4800dpi scanner and DVD/CD printing.



Worth
£179
RRP

APOY09

In association with
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AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

Entry form

After you've read the rules, send your entry to:
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CLOSING DATE 28 AUGUST 2009

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Picture details

Camera

Lens

Film (if applicable)

Exposure (if known)

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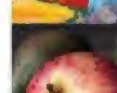
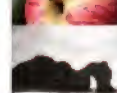


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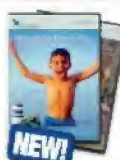
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Martin Sykes
West Yorkshire
Ringed plover

Martin rested his camera on a beanbag and waited for the bird to hop over to him. Canon EOS 3, 400mm with 1.4x converter, 1/500sec at f/8, Kodak 100 VS, tripod



Whinchat

1 Martin used the widest aperture of his lens and moved his shooting angle to capture this uncluttered background

Canon EOS 3, 500mm, 1/200sec at f/4, Fujifilm Velvia, baghide, tripod

Dipper

2 The bird's reflection creates a strong symmetrical composition

Canon EOS 3, 500mm with 1.4x converter, 1/800sec at f/5.6, Fujifilm Provia, tripod

Amateur
Photographer
Editor's
Choice

This is a lovely shot. The curve of the stem and the sideways glance of the bird's head make a great set of complementary shapes and lines that would have been enough on their own to make a pleasing image. That the bird has a grub in its beak, the shape of which echoes the form of the end of the stem, really elevates the picture's status – Damien Demolder, Editor

4



Wheatear

3 Martin used a 2x converter because he didn't want to scare the bird by getting too close. Canon EOS 3, 500mm with 2x converter, 1/100sec at f/8, Kodak 100VS, tripod

Lesser black-backed gull

4 'This gull was doing cartwheels in the sky as I tried to capture the sun on its wings,' says Martin. Canon EOS 3, 400mm with 1.4x converter, 1/2000sec at f/5.6, Kodak 100 V5

Martin Sykes West Yorkshire

Martin, 43, has been a keen wildlife photographer since he was a teenager. Although he photographs all sorts of wildlife, including deer and seals, he enjoys bird photography because he likes to capture the 'personalities and tempers of the birds.' Martin switched to digital equipment three years ago because he felt processing costs had become too high, and while he loves the freedom digital imaging affords he occasionally feels the quality of images is slightly superior on film.



Pat Burns

Miami, USA

Pat, 64, has been taking photographs since the 1980s. Her interest in photography gained momentum when she moved to the Bahamas in 1984 and began travelling extensively. Her favourite subjects are travel and wildlife, and she hopes one day to open a small gallery in her home town of Freeport, Miami.

Three pelicans

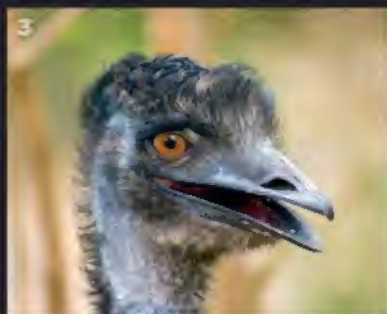
1 Pat photographed these cheeky-looking pelicans as they waited for fish handouts at Point Cook in Melbourne, Australia
Nikon D70, 28-200mm, 1/1250sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

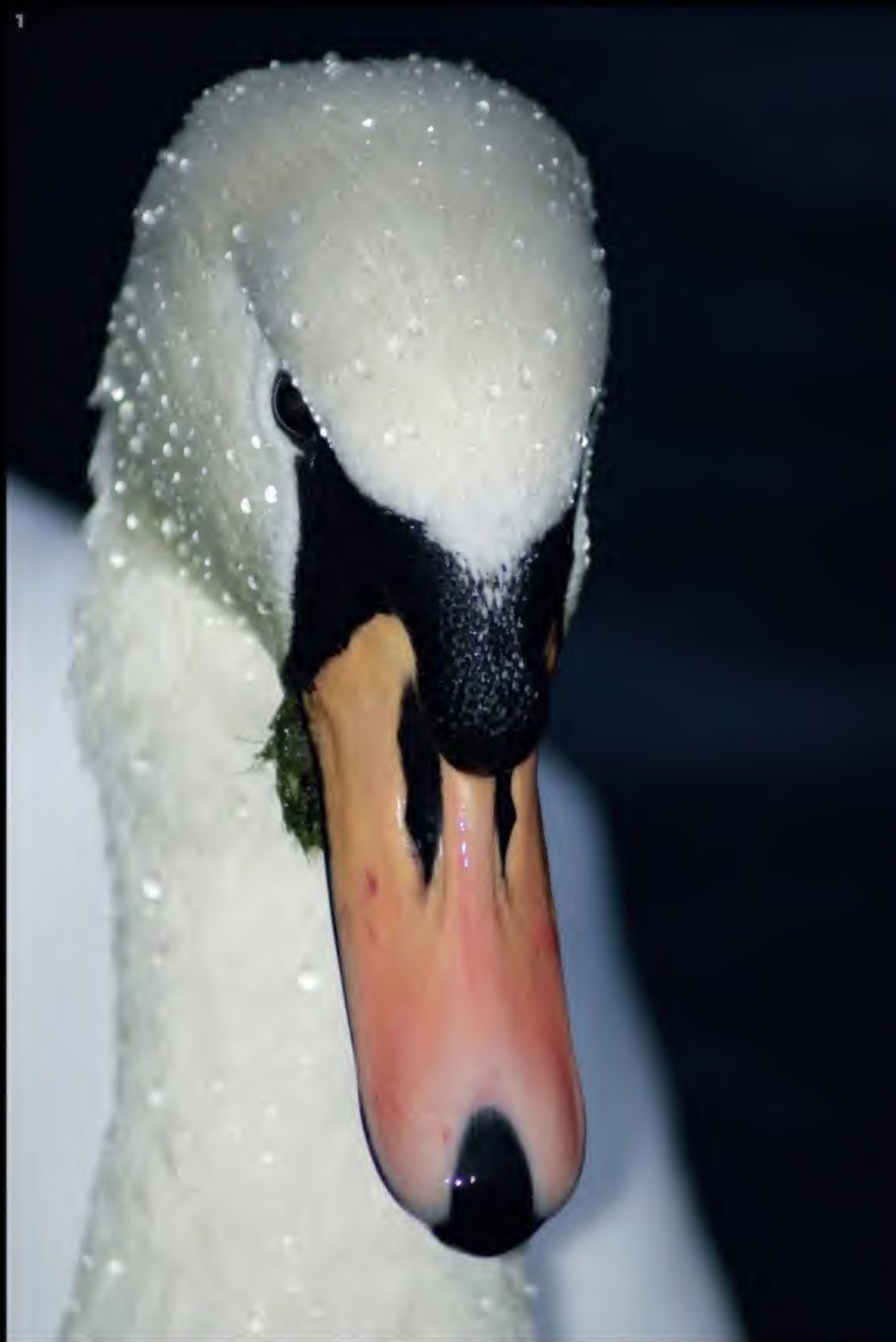
Three herons

2 Three is the magic number, and Pat again proves this with her cleverly composed composition
Nikon D70, 70-300mm, 1/500sec at f/10

Emu

3 Pat spotted this inquisitive, mischievous emu at Healesville Conservation Sanctuary in Melbourne, Australia
Nikon D70, 70-300mm, 1/40sec at f/5.3, ISO 200





Kerry Duncan East Yorkshire

Kerry's favourite subjects are wildlife and landscapes. The 27-year-old courier says: 'I've always been interested in capturing that unique moment in time, but it was a holiday in the Scottish Highlands that reaffirmed my love of photography. I love to visit places like Scotland and the Lake District, but I've also found great subjects in my back yard. What I love about photography is how no two images are ever the same. Birds are particularly rewarding to photograph because they are unpredictable.'

Swan

I Kerry has used a long lens to successfully capture the water drops and create a graceful, classic swan image
Sony Alpha 200, 300mm, 1/125sec at f/5.6, ISO 400

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Send up to six prints, slides or images on CD (please include the original files from the camera along with your submitted versions on your CD). Tell us a little about the pictures and, if you can, include details of equipment used and exposure settings.

Send your photographs to 'Appraisal' at our usual address (see page 3). Please enclose an SAE if you would like them returned.

Expert advice, help and tips from AP Editor Damien Demolder

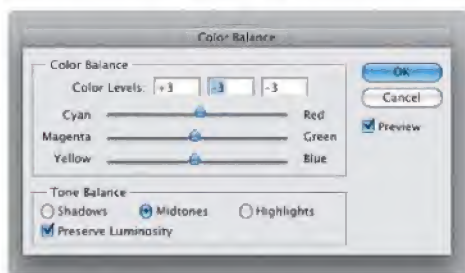
Goslings Ian Fisher

Canon EOS 350D, 135mm,
1/400sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

Having a longer-than-usual lens is pretty important when photographing birds, as Ian has discovered here. Even with a focal length of 135mm (200mm on his Canon EOS 350D), he still couldn't get close enough for this picture of some goslings, and consequently Ian has had to crop his image. However, his crop has been a little too severe – the picture now measures only 3x5in, and the image quality has really suffered. Detail is soft because it has been over-enlarged. Plus, shooting at f/5.6 provides little depth of field and is not the aperture at which Ian's lens provides it optimal optical quality.

I have been able to improve the sharpness of the picture a little by applying Unsharp Mask to the image, using an Amount of 300, a Radius of 0.6 and a Threshold of 3. It has increased the appearance of sharpness but, ultimately, there is no escaping the fact that there isn't much resolution in the image. This is not a subject that can tolerate low-resolution imaging as the goslings' down is very fine. When your lens and camera combination cannot resolve those fine details they just blend to a fuzz.

Ian took this picture on an overcast day, but while it means the contrast is nice and low and there is little detail lost to the shadows and highlights, it does often make white balancing more difficult. There is a slight green-blue-cyan cast here, so, I have rebalanced the colour using the Colour Balance tool in Photoshop, adding a bit of yellow, magenta and red to the shadows, midtones and highlight areas. I also increased contrast in the midtones a



little using Curves, just to give it a little more beef.

Finally, I can see that Ian originally cropped the picture so he could keep the top of the bird's head as well as those feet in shot, but he's ended up with a very elongated image the proportions of which don't match those of a normal camera frame; it looks uncomfortably tall. I've therefore cropped it back to the 3:2 ratio in which it would have originally been shot. Though we lose a slice of the gosling's head at the top of the frame, we've kept the foot, and most importantly we've got rid of some of that tarmac in the background. I've darkened the remaining tarmac using the Burn tool.

The colours of the birds still aren't quite right – they are still slightly over-warm – but it is a case of doing the best with what we've got. If Ian had shot this image in raw format it would be a good idea to go back to that original file to adjust the white balance, and inject some more natural colour back into the image. It is a good effort, and a great subject that Ian has identified well, but that is really only half the battle; actually making the final picture work is at least as important.

Original



Edited



Blackbird chick Lawrence Wright

Canon EOS 10D, 75-300mm,
1/250sec at f/5.6, ISO 200

Amateur
Photographer
Picture of
the week

At 15, Lawrence is one of our younger readers, and he has sent in a collection of great images of British wildlife that he took near his home.

The first image I am showing is a nicely composed picture of a woodpecker clinging to a tree. It's a great shot but it's suffering from a little diffusion that may have come about through unclean lens elements. It is really important to check your equipment is clean before you go out on a shoot, as there is nothing worse than coming back and finding that all your pictures are slightly soft, or that there's a bit of dust spoiling the image. Years ago I was photographing in a restaurant on a ship when my colleague dropped the lens of his Leica M4 into somebody's salad. He quickly picked it up before the diner noticed, stuck it back onto his camera and carried on shooting. When I was printing the films later that night I discovered that the pictures he had taken took a turn for the worse in the middle of a roll. I couldn't work out why, so I checked all the cameras only to discover a thick smear of Thousand Island dressing on the rear element of his lens. He never lived it down.

Lawrence's second picture is of a baby blackbird (I think). He has shot it while lying on the floor to get this brilliant low angle view. He has kept his aperture wide open for a really narrow depth of field and has the focus spot on – right on the bird's eye. The depth of field has really isolated the subject, pulling it right out of the background, which is filled with leaves and dried grass. Lawrence has managed to remove all these distractions by making them completely blurred. What we're left with is a nice, natural mottled background and this absolutely beautiful little bird staring straight into the lens.

The little bird has a great expression on its face, with a big, crumpled-up beak and its hair standing on end: it's just a really endearing picture. The low angle allows us to see all the blades of grass sticking up, and puts us on a level with the bird, which is a great way of giving us a sense of what it's like



“The low angle allows us to see all the blades of grass sticking up and puts us on a level with the bird, which really gives us a sense of what it's like to be that small”

to be that small. It's a view of a bird's eye from a worm's-eye view. It's just a fantastic picture and I think Lawrence has done really well, and this is why it's my picture of the week.

Keep up the good work, Lawrence, but always make sure your camera kit is clean before you go out. I think you've got a bright future in avian photography ahead of you.



Robin Graham Brown

Pentax K10D, 70-200mm, 1/125sec at f/4



When we think of wildlife photography I suppose we always think of the big, majestic and exciting creatures, such as lions and rhinos, or eagles and other birds of prey. For most of us, though, we need to look a little closer to home, and luckily there is plenty of interesting wildlife here in Britain. Perhaps the bird we are all most pleased to see is the robin. The great things about these birds is that they're common enough for everybody to have seen one, but rare enough that we still get excited when we spot one in the garden. Although they are not much more than sparrows with little red waistcoats on, they still cause a bit of a stir and they do look very jolly and brighten up the day.

Graham says he photographed this robin on a bench early one Sunday morning in January. It's a classic robin picture and done very well. Graham has framed it nicely, cropping it from his original image, and the final print is nice and close up, showing the little bird with his beak wide open and singing away.

All I would say is that the picture is perhaps a fraction too light, and that the midtones could

be brought down a tiny bit. The highlight on the bench is a little bit distracting, but it's not a big deal. The robin is facing slightly away from us, which might bother some people as it is more usual to have the animal looking at you so you can see its face. Personally, I quite like this viewpoint; you do not often get to see the tail feathers and the ends of the wings, and from that point of view it is quite interesting.

When you are focusing on small subjects such as this your camera will always focus on the closest part of the bird, so it's important to take control and direct the camera to focus on the eye. You can see here that the robin's leg is really sharp but its eye and the beak are not, yet these are the most important elements of the shot.

It's a great picture, nevertheless, and Graham has done really well. He says he used a 70-200mm lens at the long end, because even though robins are quite tame and are used to humans you still can't get that close to them. As I said before, shooting birds really does require a long lens.

ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHER

Simon Norfolk

1963-present

Simon Norfolk's passionate commitment to dealing with issues such as war and genocide has produced a powerful and influential body of work. **David Clark** looks at what makes his work unique

DURING the past decade, Simon Norfolk has established himself as one of the world's most challenging and incisive documentary photographers. He concentrates on the aftermath of wars, genocide and today's hi-tech instruments of war; his considered, contemplative images often use a subject's surface beauty to draw attention to its disturbing or even horrifying implications.

Norfolk believes photography is a tool for highlighting what's really going on in the world and focusing on stories that mainstream media ignores. His work is driven by anger and a passionate sense of mission. 'My feeling, very intensely, is that I'm white, I'm male, I'm middle-class, I'm educated, I've got credit cards, I've got a passport from a country that people recognise,' he says. 'If people like me don't bother to give people a voice, then it's just not going to be heard.'

Although born in Nigeria, Norfolk was educated in the UK, and read sociology and philosophy at Oxford and Bristol Universities. Afterwards he studied documentary photography at the Gwent College of Higher Education (now the University of Wales, Newport), taught by Magnum's

David Hurn. He then worked as an editorial photographer on left-wing publications, which included covering stories on anti-racist activities and fascist groups.

However, he became frustrated with traditional photojournalism and abandoned it in 1994. In doing so, he found his own photographic voice. In an interview, Norfolk explained why he changed his approach. 'I didn't get fed up with the subjects of photojournalism – I got fed up with the *dichés* of photojournalism, with its inability to talk about anything complicated,' he said.

'Photojournalism is a great tool for telling very simple stories: "Here's a good guy. Here's a bad guy. It's awful". Yet the stuff I was dealing with was getting more and more complicated – it felt like I was trying to play Rachmaninoff in boxing gloves... I needed to find a more complicated way to draw people in. I'm not down on photojournalism – it does what it does very well – but its job is to offer all its information instantly and immediately.' Instead, Norfolk wants us to think long and hard about what he is showing in his work.

The first results from this new approach appeared in his book, *For Most of It I*



© SIMON NORFOLK



Amateur Photographer ICONS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Decisive moments

1963 Born in Lagos, Nigeria

1990 Completes Documentary Photography course at Gwent College of Higher Education and begins freelance career

1994 Gives up photojournalism to concentrate on landscape photography

2001 Presented with a World Press Photo Award

2002 Wins the European Publishers' Award for Photography for his book, 'Afghanistan: Chronotopia'

2003 Shortlisted for the Citibank Prize

2004 Receives a prestigious Infinity Award from the International Center of Photography in New York and the Terence Donovan Award from The Royal Photographic Society

2005 Awarded a bursary by the Association of Photographers



Simon Norfolk with his 5x4in brass and mahogany view camera



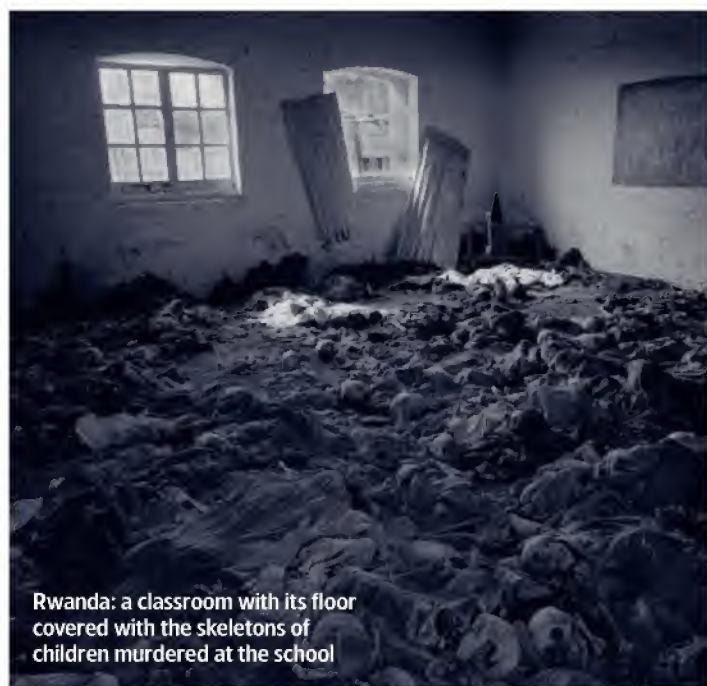
Books

'For Most Of It I Have No Words: Genocide, Landscape, Memory' (1998), 'Afghanistan: Chronotopia' (2002) and 'Bleed' (2005).

Websites

Norfolk's own website, www.simonnorfolk.com features a wide range of his work from throughout his career. He has written an introduction to each series of photographs. The site also features links to several interesting interviews with Norfolk.

Balloon seller outside a former teahouse in the Shah Shahid district of Kabul



Rwanda: a classroom with its floor covered with the skeletons of children murdered at the school



Have No Words: Genocide, Landscape, Memory (1998). It was a chilling exploration of the aftermath of the recent

genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia, and the traces of earlier genocides in Armenia and Auschwitz. Norfolk said he aimed 'to make pictures that portray the deathly emptiness that one encounters at these sites... they are not "documentary" in the traditional sense, they are documents like forensic traces at a crime scene.'

Norfolk further developed this 'forensic' approach in his next book, *Afghanistan: Chronotopia* (2002). The most famous image from the series showed a balloon-seller in front of the remains of a tea-house in Kabul (see right). Balloons had been banned under the Taliban's regime, yet they had survived the war, while, ironically, concrete buildings had been shattered.

For this project, he used a 5x4in brass and mahogany view camera – equipment that most photographers would think completely unsuitable for working in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances. Norfolk, however, explains that the camera had a direct bearing on the kind of images he produced. 'The idea of that forensic slowness of approach, the sheer difficulty of using the 5x4 in places that are quite hairy, forces me to think, "Is this worth talking about", "Is this interesting", "Have I got something to say here?" and "Can I say it well and directly, with passion?"'

Three years later he produced another book, *Bleed*, which examined the war in Bosnia during the 1990s. Like Norfolk's earlier work, these photographs document sites of mass

killings. However, they also showed a move towards a more abstract style, particularly in a series of close-up images of frozen water over excavated graves. In this work, Norfolk is exploring the idea of photographing an absence: capturing the barely detectable signs of something that has happened in the past but has gone unrecorded.

In recent years, Norfolk has continued his work on contemporary warfare, including documenting military testing locations in the Hebrides, missile and satellite launches, and photographing the powerful supercomputers that design nuclear weapons.

'All the work I've been doing over the past couple of years is about the way the battlefield is being crafted now and for 20 years from now,' he says. 'The technologies there are omniscient and omnipotent. The amount of money that's being sunk into them is beyond the dreams of Croesus and the potential of what they will be able to achieve makes your blood run cold.'

'But it's a problem for photographers. How do you photograph a submarine launching a missile? There's nothing to see. How do you photograph a satellite in space listening to a phone conversation or tapping into credit card transactions? How do you photograph cyber-warfare?'

Norfolk's questions reflect a dilemma that is central to photojournalism and documentary photography in today's rapidly changing world. Yet his determination to address important contemporary issues and uncover hidden or forgotten stories means that he won't stop finding new, arresting and innovative ways of doing it. **AP**



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Welcome to our test, reviews and advice section. Over the next few pages we will present this week's equipment tests, reader questions and technique pointers

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If you're a serious birder or wildlife photographer, the Stealth Gear Photographer's 2 in 1 poncho could quickly prove its worth. The 100% polyester PVC poncho is waterproof and may prove invaluable while you're out taking photographs in the unpredictable British weather. It is large enough to keep both a photographer, and his or her equipment bag, dry. The only downside is that the thick material used means the poncho weighs more than 1kg, though it does fold down to a compact size and comes with its own 20x30cm bag.

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I found there was ample room under the poncho even when wearing a large photo backpack, and it doesn't restrict movement when shooting. It is quick and simple to put on if there is a sudden downpour, and the hood can be adjusted so that your head and neck are well covered.

Richard Sibley

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All our tests are conducted by people who understand the product area, as well as photography. We aim to discover any shortcomings, as well as finding those aspects that deserve praise. All our tests are thorough, honest and independent

Micro verdict

Cheap enough for wildlife photographers to keep in case of bad weather



Manfrotto Carbon Fibre 694CX Monopod 4 Section £149.95

MADE of lightweight carbon fibre, Manfrotto's 694CX weighs just 590g. This makes it light and very manageable, so it's ideal for bird photography or simply to take on your travels this summer.

The monopod has 'action extension locks' that are made of lightweight magnesium. These can be swiftly released allowing the extension of each of its four sections. When fully extended it achieves a height of 165cm, but is only 54cm when closed. At the top of the monopod is a wrist strap and a neoprene handle, making it comfortable to hold and carry.

A monopod is an essential piece of equipment for a bird or wildlife photographer, and the Manfrotto 694CX is one of the best available. However, one thing to consider is that no head is included with the monopod, so you need to obtain one before attaching a camera. I

recommend the Manfrotto 234RC Monopod Quick Release, which costs £26.95.

Nick O'Doherty

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Micro verdict

An effective and lightweight monopod for bird photography



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Lenses for bird photography

Photographing birds calls for long telephoto optics that can be expensive, heavy and unwieldy. **Angela Nicholson** tries out a few more affordable options

WITH the exception of bread-loving ducks at the local park and dive-bombing seagulls cheeky enough to steal a chip from your hand, most birds are very shy creatures. This means getting close to them is tricky, and the prospective bird photographer is forced to use long focal length optics to fill the frame with the subject.

In addition to their hefty price tag, one problem with using very long focal length optics is their huge size and weight, which makes transporting and using them just a little bit trickier than more common or garden lenses. This is particularly true of lenses with large maximum apertures, but these optics allow messy backgrounds to be blurred and help get the best from most cameras' AF systems.

While our lens-testing regime has found that these days there are few really poor lenses and that

many are capable of superb results, the handling quirks of bulky optics can make getting decent images a struggle when out in the elements or in the confined space of a hide. The sheer weight of some lenses may be enough to put off the budding bird photographer. Unfortunately, the realisation that a lens is too heavy often only comes after it has been carried some metres from the car towards the shooting site or as the optic is manhandled into position. It's an expensive mistake, so in this article I will take a look at six lenses that have the potential for bird photography to see how they handle.

The lenses

Although camera producers such as Canon and Nikon produce lenses ideally suited for photographing birds, for this article we have concentrated on comparable offerings from

independent manufacturers such as Sigma and Tamron, which offer wider compatibility with camera systems. To investigate just how challenging their size and weight can make using large telephoto optics, I took a collection of longer lenses along to the London Wetland Centre in Barnes to photograph the resident birds.

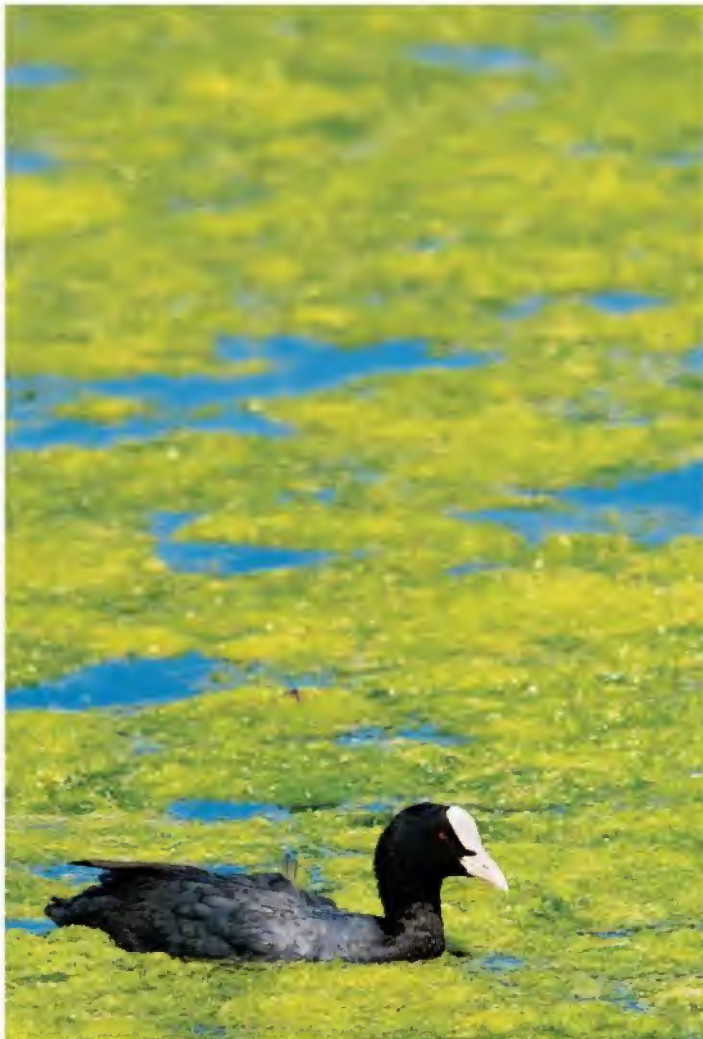
The Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 EX DG Macro HSM II (£799.99) doesn't have an especially long maximum focal length, but it (and camera manufacturers' comparable lenses) is a popular choice for enthusiast photographers, so I was keen to see how useful it is for ornithological photography. This lens is also compatible with Sigma's APO Tele Converter 2x EX DG and as it has a constant maximum aperture of f/2.8, autofocus is possible on Canon, Nikon, Sigma and the latest Sony cameras. Unfortunately, Pentax users can only focus manually with this lens and converter combination.

On a full-frame camera the teleconverter increases the effective focal length of the 70-200mm lens to 140-400mm. However, on an

APS-C format camera there is an additional focal length magnification factor and the lens performs like a 210-600mm optic.

Sigma's 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM (£899.99) and Tamron's SP AF 200-500mm f/5-6.3 Di LD (IF) (£1,099.99) have both fared well in our tests and they have potential for a wide range of photography, including snapping birds. On an APS-C-format camera, their effective focal lengths become 225-750mm and 300-750mm respectively. Conveniently, the Sigma optic is also compatible with the company's 2x teleconverter, which results in an effective focal length of 300-1,000mm on a full-frame camera and 450-1,500mm on APS-C format. The two-stop reduction in the effective maximum aperture, however, means that the camera's AF system cannot function. The built-in stabilisation (OS) in the Sigma lens has obvious benefits when handholding a camera.

To investigate whether there is a significant benefit to spending more money on a lens, I also took along the Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 EX DG



Taken handheld with an effective focal length of 405mm. The bright, sunny conditions allowed a shutter speed of 1/2500sec at f/6 and ISO 500

HSM. While its recommended retail price of £2,999.99 may be relatively small potatoes for the professional wildlife photographer, it is enough to make the average enthusiast break into a nervous sweat. This lens is also compatible with the Sigma APO Tele Converter 2x EX DG and on an APS-C-format camera its effective focal length becomes 360-900mm, with full AF operation.

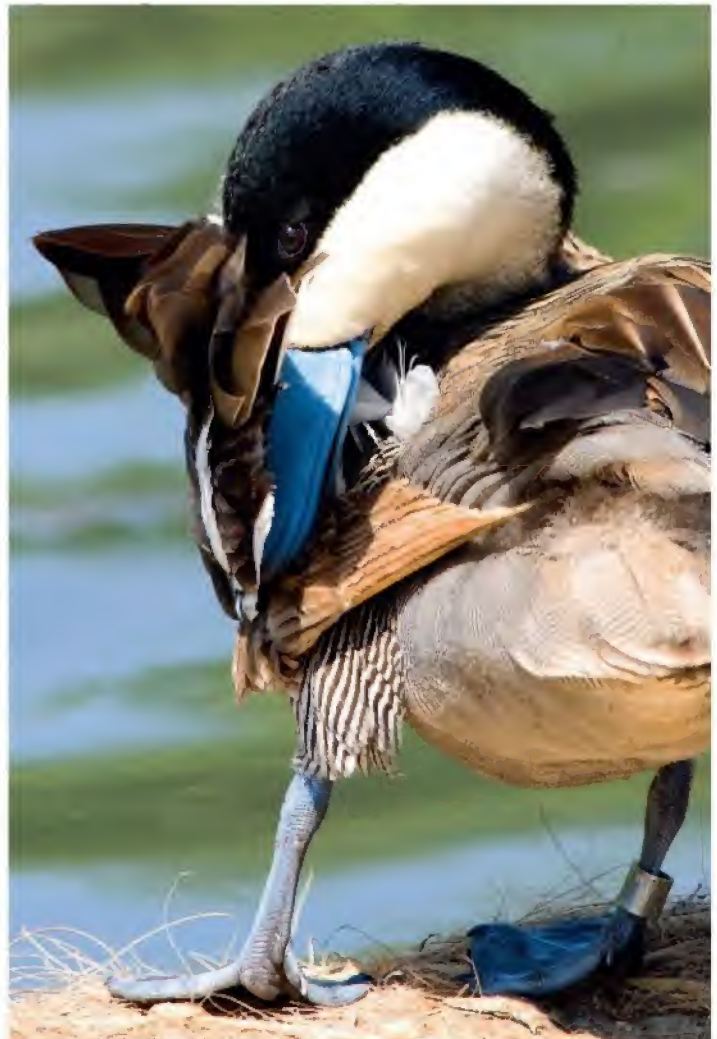
All these lenses come supplied with deep lens hoods and tripod collars as standard, and, importantly for bird photographers, the three Sigma optics feature Sigma's Hyper Sonic Motor for high-speed, quiet autofocus.

The final two lenses in my heavily laden rucksack offer the benefit of long focal lengths in a compact, lightweight and affordable form: the Samyang 500mm f/6.3 (£199.99) and 800mm f/8 (£299.99) mirror lenses. These lenses have a screw thread-mount and require a T-mount adaptor for use with a modern DSLR. Both Samyang optics are compatible with full-frame and APS-C-format cameras, with the latter increasing

their effective focal length to 750mm and 1,200mm respectively.

In the hide

Within minutes of installing myself in the 'Wildside' hide at the Wetland Centre, it was clear that an effective focal length of 500mm or less isn't sufficient for frame-filling shots of mallard-sized birds more than around five metres away. In fact, even with



This was taken using the Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM at the 500mm end on a Nikon D300, giving an effective focal length of 750mm

an effective focal length of 900mm, most birds were out of range for interesting shots and I had to wait for them to venture closer. Fortunately, the permanent hides have a collection of wooden benches so it's possible to sit and wait in relative comfort.

The short, wide glazed widows of the hide can be opened and are designed to accommodate binoculars, telescopes and camera lenses.

However, the wooden sill makes using a tripod or monopod rather awkward with the lens being held deeper in the hide. A more comfortable and convenient approach is to rest the lens on the sill, preferably cushioned by a beanbag. Even with this support it takes a bit of practice to locate a bird in the viewfinder when very long telephoto optics are being used. Tiny camera

London Wetland Centre

The London Wetland Centre in Barnes covers 42 acres and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It offers plenty of opportunity to see and photograph birds, providing that images are for personal use only. All commercial or stock library photography, filming and recording must be agreed in advance with the centre. Please call 0208 409 4400 for any commercial filming or photographic enquiries.

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7 SIGMA APO TELE CONVERTER 2X EX DG

Lens construction	6 elements in 5 groups
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Aperture coupling range	f/2.8-32
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Lens construction
Angle of view
Diaphragm blades
Minimum aperture
Minimum focusing distance
Filter size
Dimensions
Weight
SRP
Mount

movements have a dramatic impact upon the composition and it is quite difficult to follow the movement of relatively slow-moving birds on the water.

With the 2x teleconverter and an APS-C-format camera, the 70-200mm optic is one of the lighter options available. Though it is relatively easy to manoeuvre and use, its maximum effective focal length of 600mm just isn't long enough unless the birds get very close to the hide. On the whole, I found the birds were at least ten metres away from the hide, making this optical arrangement fairly redundant.

I found the Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM and Tamron SP AF 200-500mm f/5-6.3 Di

LD (IF) by far the most convenient and effective lenses to use in the hide, especially on an APS-C-format camera. Both of these lenses are lighter than the Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 EX DG HSM, but with just over half a kilogram between them, the Tamron optic is appreciably lighter and easier to position.

Focusing the Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM manually when it is mounted with a 2x converter requires just a light touch and is easy and swift. Keeping up with the movement of the birds across the water is a little trickier, though. I found that the viewfinder of the Nikon D300 I used this optical arrangement on was bright enough to focus manually despite the two-stop reduction in

the maximum effective aperture. I should mention, however, that this was during a gloriously sunny summer day and the experience may be slightly different on a wet, overcast afternoon in November.

With an effective maximum focal length of 1,250mm, the stabilisation system of the Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM should come in handy, but I found that the way it jumps to life, causing the scene to shift when the shutter release button is pressed, makes uncomfortable viewing. Consequently, when supporting the camera and lens with my elbows on the hide windowsill I preferred to turn it off. Images taken using the converter are a little softer than those taken without it, but it can

give the reach needed to make a decent image.

With a weight of 2.6kg, the Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 EX DG HSM is a hefty beast and is best used on a tripod or at least a monopod, as I found its weight made it awkward and cumbersome to use on the hide windowsill. Ideally, it should be used with a heavy-duty, fluid-moving tripod head because otherwise it is difficult to move into position and then make the small, smooth movements required to follow a subject across the water. Even when used with the 2x teleconverter on the Nikon D300, the AF system was able to put in a decent performance with this lens. A functioning AF system does make life easier. However, achieving the 2x

1 SIGMA 120-300MM F/2.8 EX DG HSM

This lens was created by transforming a 300mm f/2.8 optic into a zoom lens, giving the photographer greater control over composition. Sigma's 300mm f/2.8 has a recommended retail price of £2,699.99, so the zoom lens makes a very attractive alternative. Two SLD (Special Low Dispersion) glass elements in the front group and another element of SLD in the rear group help correct chromatic aberration, while the lens coating reduces flare and ghosting.

In addition, internal focusing and zooming mean that this lens doesn't change in length as it is used and the front element doesn't rotate, so polarising and graduated neutral density filters are easier to use.

2 SIGMA 150-500MM F/5-6.3 DG OS HSM

This is the only one of our lenses to feature a stabilisation system. Sigma claims that its Optical Stabiliser (OS) mechanism enables this lens to be handheld at shutter speeds up to four stops slower than would normally be possible. Three SLD (Special Low Dispersion) glass elements correct chromatic aberration and a rear focus system minimises the fluctuation of aberration that can be caused by focusing. In addition, the super multi-layer lens coating reduces flare and ghosting.

3 TAMRON SP AF 200-500MM F/5-6.3 DI LD (IF)

This Tamron lens has two LD (Low Dispersion/Low Refraction) elements to help minimise chromatic aberration, and the barrel is manufactured from durable but lightweight plastics to give strength. A minimum focusing distance of 250cm means that, like the other optics discussed here, this lens is suitable for photographing birds in a small garden as well as large areas. Remember, though, that depth of field decreases with subject distance. In addition, a clever, detachable filter effect controller (FEC) enables a polarising filter to be rotated even when the hood is attached.

4 SIGMA 70-200MM F/2.8 EX DG MACRO HSM II

This Tamron lens has two LD (Low Dispersion/Low Refraction) elements to help minimise chromatic aberration, and the barrel is manufactured from durable but lightweight plastics to give strength. A minimum focusing distance of 250cm means that, like the other optics discussed here, this lens is suitable for photographing birds in a small garden as well as large areas. Remember, though, that depth of field decreases with subject distance. In addition, a clever, detachable filter effect controller (FEC) enables a polarising filter to be rotated even when the hood is attached.

5 SAMYANG 500MM F/6.3 MIRROR

These two multi-coated mirror lenses are available from London Camera Exchange for £199.99 and £299.99 respectively. They each have a fixed focal length and aperture.

6 SAMYANG 800MM F/8 MIRROR



In mirror lenses, the light enters the front element, then reflects from a mirror near the lens mount, up to another mirror, then back through a series of glass elements, and into the camera. Because the light path is 'folded' inside the lens, mirror lenses can be much shorter than conventional telephoto optics

18 elements in 16 groups	21 elements in 15 groups	13 elements in 10 groups	18 elements in 15 groups	7 elements in 6 groups	8 elements in 8 groups
20.4-8.2°	16.4-5°	12-5°	34.3-12.3°	5°	3°
9	9	9	9		
f/32	f/22	f/32	f/22	f/6.3 (fixed)	f/8 (fixed)
150-250cm	220cm	250cm	100cm	200cm	3.5m
105mm	86mm	86mm	77mm	34mm (rear) 95mm (front)	30.5mm(rear) 105mm(front)
113x271mm	94.7x252mm	93.5x227mm	86.6x184mm	119.5x98mm	144.5x111mm
2,600g	1,780g	1,237g	1,345g	705g	946g
£2,999.99	£899.99	£1,099.99	£799.99	£199.99	£299.99
Canon, Nikon, Sigma	Canon, Nikon, Pentax, Sigma, Sony,	Canon, Nikon, Sony	Canon, Four Thirds, Nikon, Pentax, Sigma, Sony	T-Mount	T-Mount

multiplication in the focal length does have a noticeably detrimental effect on image quality, and users should not expect to make dramatic selective enlargements of the images.

Although they are extremely light and compact, the Samyang mirror lenses unfortunately lower the contrast of the viewfinder and make the scene appear slightly misty. This makes manual focusing tricky, and I found I used a back and forth method, gradually homing in on my target. Naturally, this is less than ideal with moving subjects, but it is possible to get reasonable shots of stationary birds.

On foot

Though any of the lenses can be used on a tripod outside the confines

of the hide, when in the open and walking you are likely to come across birds that have to be photographed quickly while handholding the camera. It is possible to use the Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 EX DG HSM handheld, but it's not especially easy and I found my arms soon tired of the weight. The Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM and Tamron SP AF 200-500mm f/5-6.3 Di LD (IF) are much more practical options in these circumstances. These lenses allow plenty of scope for reframing the subject if it gets closer to, or further away from, the camera. The Sigma 70-200mm f/2.8 EX DG Macro HSM II is also a feasible option, especially on an APS-C-format camera and with tamer

birds. When combined with the APO Tele Converter 2x EX DG, this lens remains handheldable and can take headshots of swans or frame-filling images of more distant ducks, and so on.

The low weight and compact size of the Samyang 500mm f/6.3 and 800mm f/8 mirror lenses makes them ideal for handheld use, but as I mentioned earlier care is needed to achieve accurate manual focus and they are not ideally suited for use with moving subjects. However, with a bit of practice it is possible to get some very respectable shots.

Summary

A 70-200mm f/2.8 lens is a popular choice with many enthusiast

photographers, but even when used on an APS-C-format camera and combined with a teleconverter it is of limited use for wild bird photography. However, with a bit of luck and a lot of patience it is possible to get good images when birds venture close to a hide. It is also a good choice with tamer birds or when a feeder is used to tempt them (turn to page 23 for more information on how to do this). But those photographers who want to get a bit closer to our feathered friends will be well served by a lens like the Sigma 150-500mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM and Tamron SP AF 200-500mm F5-6.3 Di LD (IF). These optics are lighter and less cumbersome than the significantly more expensive Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 EX DG HSM. **AP**

Photographer

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Q&A

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Speaking volumes



Tom Adams asks I have five hardback, bound copies of *Amateur Photographer*. The oldest two, 1946 and 1949, each contain a complete year's worth of magazines. I also have all of the issues from 1951, but they are split between two bound volumes, and I have the July-December issues of 1952. I was wondering, do these volumes have any value?

Richard Sibley replies With the issues being in bound volumes, they are likely in better condition than many copies of AP of this age. Sadly, they are unlikely to be worth a fortune, but they may be worth a few pounds.

Having checked on eBay, I found that copies of

AP from this era can sell for up to £4, depending on their condition and the particular content of the magazine. A complete bound collection will push the price up a little. If you were considering selling them I would try a camera fair and see what a dealer or photographic historian may be prepared to pay.

Delving into developer

Alan Johnson asks In 1961, Geoffrey Crawley wrote that potassium and sodium ions in developers are not exactly equivalent, possibly due to conversion of the developing agents to sodium or potassium salts. For developers with low concentrations of developing agent, potassium carbonate gives

lower contrast than sodium carbonate and, by the time the same contrast has built up, will give greater toe speed. Does he still consider that potassium carbonate gives higher speed than sodium carbonate? US chemists have suggested using propylene glycol as a solvent for the developing agents as it reduces oxidation. The solvent is typically present at about

2% concentration in the working solution. Is it likely to have any effect on film speed or sharpness?

Geoffrey Crawley replies Yes, in the type of developer quoted, the statement still applies. Also, being more soluble than the sodium salt, it is of use in concentrated liquid developers. This is the type likely to contain a low quantity of developing agent when diluted. Generally, I would hold to the opinions expressed in that article and several of the formulae remain in wide use.

With regard to glycol, its inclusion is now standard practice in concentrated liquid developer formulae, if of a type that needs to be protected from crystallisation in low temperature storage conditions. When this protection is necessary, I use mono-ethylene glycol at around 2.5%.



Troubled conversion

Shaun Pringle asks I recently bought a Jackar 3x teleconverter, costing £65, to use with my Nikon Coolpix 8800. However, no matter what I try, the photographs I take with it are not in focus.

You will see from the photographs above that it is much better taking the photograph without the teleconverter lens. I've taken many pictures, using a tripod and the self-timer to reduce camera shake, but always get the same results. Is it usual to obtain worse photographs with the teleconverter lens than without it?

Richard Sibley replies Lenses are designed for optimum performance in the camera they are used with. The trouble with teleconverters, particularly those for compact cameras (which are fitted to the front of the lens), is that they add more glass to an existing design. This changes the optical properties of a lens, and generally not for the better.

Minimum focusing distance will be different, along with the images being softer due to the introduction of more glass. Add to this chromatic aberrations and it is quite understandable why results from teleconverters can be poor.

Generally, the cheaper teleconverters for compact cameras are actually based on designs for video cameras, where the lower-resolution moving image is more forgiving.

Even the superior teleconverters for SLR lenses compromise the quality of an image in return for the extended focal length.

Essentials purchase

Lindsay Forester asks I recently emailed Intro2020 regarding the Seculine Action level. I was told the firm doesn't have an online shop and recommended that I buy the item from www.crookedimaging.co.uk. What do you know of them?

FAQ

Frequently Asked Question

One question readers often ask about photographing wildlife is whether it is best to use a tripod, a monopod, or rely on a camera's image stabilisation (IS) system. The answer really depends on the type of wildlife photography you do, and each solution has its own advantages and disadvantages.

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Total eclipse of the sun

Alphonso asks My friend Alison is going to China and wishes to take some shots of the total eclipse of the sun. She will be taking a DSLR and tripod, but does she need anything in the way of filters?

beejaybee replies During the total phase you do not need a filter.

For the partial phase, buy a sheet of Baader Solar Film and make a simple holder for it; instructions on how to do this usually come with the film. You will need cereal box cardboard and some sticky tape.

Do not use photographic filters; even the ND3 (x1,000) is nowhere near dark enough to be safe during the partial phase, especially since there is a lot of transmission in the infrared, which is invisible but can very effectively cook your retina.

Baader Solar Film looks like cooking foil, is very protective, has an optical density of 5.0 (one part in 100,000 transmission), but it reflects or absorbs everything in the ultraviolet and infrared range. It is usually readily available from astronomical stockists at around £15 for an A4 sheet, which will be enough for your camera lens, a pair of binoculars or a spotting scope, and leave enough left over for 'eclipse glasses'.

There are no heat or pain sensors in the retina so don't take a chance with your eyesight. The solar film is relatively cheap and effective, and (when used according to the instructions) very safe indeed.

Richard Sibley replies As beejaybee says, even the strongest ND filters, such as the Hoya ND400, are not suitable for viewing the eclipse as they still pass UV and infrared light. You may use them for photography, *but only* if you use Live View to compose your image and *do not* look through the viewfinder. If you use Baader film, make sure that there are no holes or scratches in the film, which may allow unfiltered light to pass through.

American company Thousand Oaks Optical produces screw-thread black polymer solar filters. The filters are priced around £30-35, though you must email them for the cost of postage to the UK. For more information visit www.thousandoaksoptical.com/solar.html.

Richard Sibley replies Intro2020 is the official UK distributor of Seculine products; as it is not a retailer, it does not have its own online shop. Instead, it will recommend either an online or local retailer who can supply you with the product. Rest assured that any retailer recommended by Intro2020 will be a genuine retailer.



Stabilisation systems allow the photographer to reduce the usable shutter speed by up to two stops. However, if you happen to be using a 300mm f/2.8 lens with a teleconverter, then the weight and magnification can make it more difficult for a stabilisation system to compensate fully. It is still possible to get good handheld shots using IS if you are using smaller and lighter telephoto lenses such as the Tokina 80-400mm AT-X f/4.5-5.6 AF II D.

Obviously, the best way to guarantee that camera shake doesn't affect image sharpness is to use a tripod. This is a great solution if you are concentrating your

photography on a particular area, or if you are seated in a hide. If you are more inclined to stalk for wildlife then the impracticalities of having to carry the extra weight of a tripod, and the time spent correctly positioning and setting it up, can make it too slow to be practical.

Those who do prefer to track wildlife in the wild or in nature reserves would be better with a monopod as they are lighter and more manoeuvrable and compact. While it doesn't offer the rigidity of a tripod, it does help to reduce vertical camera shake that can be caused by using longer, heavier, telephoto lenses. **Richard Sibley**

Next week

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Macro



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In full flower

Brian Matthews on achieving creative macro images using a 24-70mm lens with an extension tube

An intimate 1:1



Flickr's top macro man **Brian Valentine** shares his tips for getting in close

© BRIAN VALENTINE

Macro systems

AP's technical department uses three different setups from the completely manual to the highly automatic in a **macro challenge**

Geoffrey Crawley explains...

AP's photo-science consultant explains what 'macro' really means, and examines the challenges faced by macro lens designers in the first of a two-part article

Does it stack up?

Barney Britton tries out **ZMCombine**, a free download designed to help achieve extended depth of field in macro photographs



Remote triggers...

When photographing birds and other wildlife, alternative methods of triggering and supporting a camera can be advantageous. **Richard Sibley** explores the options

WE can't all afford a 500mm f/4 telephoto lens for photographing wildlife. However, there are other options for getting close-up shots of birds and other wildlife.

Firing your camera's shutter via a remote camera trigger allows you to place a camera and lens close to a subject and then retreat to a distance where you are not going to scare the birds away, be this a camouflage hide or the comfort of your own home.

However, there are a number of different ways that you can fire a camera shutter without having your finger over the shutter button.

I've looked at the options available, and have weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of each. My general conclusion is that a wireless trigger is preferable, as it allows the photographer to be positioned further from the camera. Having said that, some wired releases have their

own particular advantages, such as intervalometers, or even the ability to tether a camera to a computer for full preview and control. Which trigger is most suitable may depend on the particular subject you wish to photograph: wading birds will require a different remote technique to photographing chicks in a nest.

It is not just remote triggers that offer an alternative method of shooting. Apart from a tripod, there are a number of other methods of supporting a camera and lens. Some are able to support a camera on the branch of a tree, or extremely low to the ground. Even the humble monopod can be adapted to give it extra support, which will make it more suitable for use with longer lenses and bird photography.

Whatever the type of wildlife photos you wish to take, there should be an alternative trigger and support to help you get the shot you want.

Type

AIR RELEASE £10-£35

Range: Usually available in lengths of 3, 5 or 10m

Far from the best method in the digital age



INFRARED REMOTE £20-£350

Range: Generally around 8m, but 100m possible

Basic wireless trigger, but more expensive models have great functions



RADIO REMOTE £35-£700

Range: From around 80m upwards

Radio remotes are great. Wi-Fi versions offer full camera control via a computer



CABLE RELEASE £5-£150

Range: Usually between 30cm and a few metres

Not long enough to be practical



USB TETHERED £10-£168.99

Range: Up to 5m before extra power is required

Offers a huge amount of control, but over relatively short distances



In use

An air-release cable works by forcing air from a rubber bulb to press a pin down on to the shutter release. Most older SLRs will have the required socket to screw the release pin onto the shutter, but newer SLRs will require an adapter for the air release to work (see Options, right).

Once attached, it is simply a case of squeezing the bulb to fire the shutter and take an image. When squeezing the bulb it can take a

fraction of a second before there is enough pressure for the shutter to be pressed, so this method is not suitable for shots that require precise timing.

Autofocusing can be awkward with an air release, requiring a light squeeze of the bulb to focus, then a harder one to take the picture, but there is no way to tell if this method has worked. It is best to pre-focus manually on an area and use the device purely to trigger the shutter.

Triggering a camera's shutter via infrared requires two parts: a receiver and a transmitter. The transmitter is the remote control unit that sends an infrared signal to the receiver. Some cameras have built-in receivers and only require a remote control. Others need the remote control and a receiver, which are supplied as a kit.

The receiver usually sits on a camera's hotshoe, plugging into its cable release socket. When a signal

is received, the shutter is triggered. However, the infrared remote must have a direct line of sight with the receiver, which, because it is sitting on the hotshoe, is pointing in the same direction as the lens. This means you will need to be positioned a few metres in front of the camera, so make sure you stay out of shot.

Most remote controls have the same two-stage button as a DSLR shutter, so you can activate autofocus, and trigger the shutter.

Radio remotes work in a similar way to infrared remote control triggers, but using radio signals rather than an infrared beam. This allows them to trigger the camera from further away, and without the need for a direct line of sight with the camera.

In fact, most radio remote controls will work through glass and thin walls, making them perfect for shooting birds and wildlife from the comfort of a permanent hide. The majority will

have four channels, so you can make sure that you are not working on the same channel as another nearby photographer.

More advanced wireless remote devices operate using a digital Wi-Fi signal, which allows you to remotely view, and change exposure and focus settings, via a Live View display on a computer. The devices are expensive and are really the preserve of pro photographers who need to send images immediately to a computer.

A simple mechanical cable release is similar to an air release, except that it uses a wire rather than air to trigger the shutter. Generally, wire cable releases are limited to just a few metres.

Electronic cable releases are now the norm, though again they are usually limited to short distances. Basic versions are usually able to focus as well as fire the shutter, and can perform timed exposures

and lock the shutter for manual bulb exposures.

However, like other triggers, the more expensive models have more sophisticated features, such as timers for delayed exposures and for setting extremely long exposure times. For bird photographers wishing to document a particular location, a release with an intervalometer function allows a series of images to be taken at set intervals over a designated period of time.

By connecting a DSLR to a computer via a USB cable, it is possible to control all the exposure settings of a camera remotely. Most DSLRs offer this functionality, so long as you have the correct software.

The maximum length of USB cable that can do this is 5m, though a powered USB hub can be used to connect cables together. Having this ability to focus the camera and see a Live View preview of your

image so you know exactly when to take the shot is extremely useful. In practice, though, the short distance can make its use difficult for bird photography.

However, it can be a suitable method if the camera is tethered to a suitable laptop in a hide, with the camera positioned a few metres outside.

Longer distances are possible using a wireless Wi-Fi transmitter (see Radio Remote, above).

For and against

✓ One of the cheapest remote release methods available. Not reliant on batteries. Simple mechanical method.

✗ Slight shutter lag. Only compatible with most modern DSLRs via an adapter

✓ A good option instead of a radio trigger. Many additional functions available if you are prepared to pay for them.

✗ A direct line of sight to the camera is required. Some may not function in extremely bright light.

✓ Allow the greatest distance from the camera. Can work through glass and thin walls. Wi-Fi versions offer full camera control via a PC.

✗ Wi-Fi wireless devices are very expensive. Security can be an issue if you are standing further from your camera.

✓ Simple mechanical releases are the cheapest remote release method available. Electronic models may offer features such as an intervalometer.

✗ Older mechanical releases will require an adapter.

✓ Many cameras come with remote capture software. Offers a live, remote preview and full exposure adjustment.

✗ Can only be used over relatively short distances. Reliant on using a laptop computer.

Options

I used the Kaiser 10m pneumatic release, which is available from www.fotospeed.com for £31.30. If you own a DSLR you may need an adapter, such as the SRB-Griturn cable release bracket, which costs £24.95, or the Kaiser cable release adapter, which costs around £22.60. For more information visit www.srb-griturn.com and www.fotospeed.com respectively.

I used the Nikon ML-3 remote control set (£245.99). Besides the standard triggering options, it is able to create an infrared beam between the transmitter and receiver, and fire the shutter if this beam is broken, which is perfect for wildlife photography. Canon offers the equally sophisticated LC-5 (around £360), which has a huge 100m range. More basic infrared remotes can cost as little as £20.

Wireless radio remote controls can vary greatly in cost depending on functionality. I tried the Hähnel HW 433 N80 pro remote control, which is available for around £49. The remote is available in Canon, Nikon, Olympus and Sony fits, and would be my recommendation for bird photography and general wildlife. Wi-Fi transmitters are very expensive, but are the ultimate wireless solution.

A basic 1m wire cable release is available from SRB-Griturn (www.srb-griturn.com), though this will also require an adapter (see Air Release, above). Third-party electronic cable releases are available. The Hähnel remote shutter release, which is available for Canon, Nikon, Sony and Olympus cameras, costs around £20. However, even with a 2m lead, it may be too short for bird photography.

Many DSLR manufacturers supply remote capture software with their cameras. Nikon DSLRs require Nikon Camera Control 2.5, which costs £168.99. Third-party solutions are also available, including Breeze Systems' DSLR Remote Pro and NKRemote, which each cost £69.95. For more information visit www.breezesys.com. Once you have the relevant software, a 5m USB cable should cost around £10.

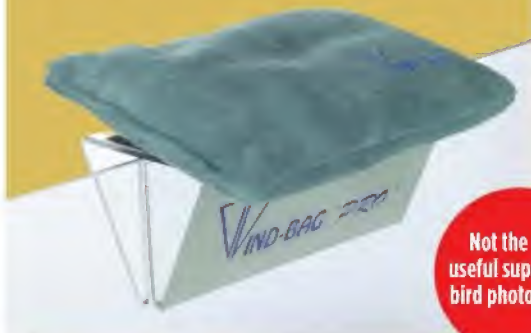
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When a tripod won't do, try some of these alternative ways of supporting your camera and lens combination

WINDBAG PRO £24.95

The Windbag Pro is a very simple plastic device that slides over a car window, providing a platform on which a beanbag sits and which can in turn help to support larger lenses. Although it won't be of much use in more remote areas, it's great for when you spot something while driving in the countryside, or if you are lucky enough to be going on safari.

For more information or to buy visit www.speedgraphic.co.uk



Not the most useful support for bird photography

TREK-TECH OPTERA PRO 460 £54.49

Although similar to a Gorillapod, the jointed legs of the Trek-Tech Optera Pro 460 are covered in material, which helps add extra grip. The biggest difference is that one of the Optera's legs is twice as long as the other two. This allows it to be wrapped further around an object, or even to be folded up to help support a telephoto lens. With its MagMount quick-release plate making it easy to remove the camera from the Optera Pro 460, it really is a useful alternative support for the more adventurous photographer.

For more information visit www.johnsons-photopia.co.uk



One of the most useful alternative supports available

A cheap, simple and effective must-have support



Allows your camera to be supported in all manner of places

JOBY GORILLAPOD FOCUS around £90

The three fully articulated and jointed legs of the Joby Gorillapod make it much more than a conventional table-top tripod. Using the 29cm legs, the Gorillapod can be wrapped around the branches of trees, railings, posts and any other number of places. This makes it perfect for positioning your camera in a tree and triggering the shutter with a wireless remote.

For more information visit www.intro2020.co.uk

WILDLIFE STUDIO DELUX BEANBAG £12.95

A beanbag is one of the most useful accessories you can have in your camera bag. The Wildlife Studio Delux Beanbag is split down the centre, which allows it to be easily placed on a tree branch or even over a car window. However, at its simplest it can be placed on the ground and used to keep a lens steady while you photograph wildlife from low down.

For more information or to buy visit www.thewildlifestudio.com



MANFROTTO 361 SHOULDER BRACE £24.95

Monopods provide a lightweight alternative to a tripod for photographers who like to track the birds they photograph. Unfortunately, what they make up for in portability they lose in sturdiness, with monopods lacking the support a tripod offers. The Manfrotto 361 shoulder brace fits to the top of a monopod and is designed to push into your shoulder when shooting. This adds stability and helps reduce movements that could cause camera shake.

For more information visit www.bogenimaging.co.uk



Perfect for when tracking birds

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Amateur
Photographer
Explains...

If you are keen to enter the world of wildlife photography but can't justify the cost of extreme telephoto lenses for your DSLR, digiscoping might be right up your street. **Barney Britton** explains

Digiscoping

DIGISCOPING is the practice of attaching a camera to a spotting scope or telescope using an adapter, so the camera records the view your eye would normally see through the scope. One advantage of digiscoping over conventional extreme telephoto lenses is that the effective focal lengths of telescopes and spotting scopes are extremely long – at least 1,000mm (equivalent). Typically, such as lens is, in terms of cost and bulk, beyond the reach of most enthusiast photographers.

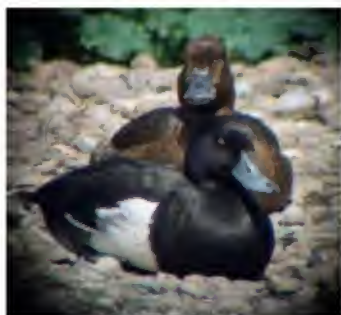
In this article I will show the sort of results you can expect from relatively



inexpensive digiscoping outfits, as well as listing some higher-quality options for the more quality-orientated photographer/ornithologist. On page 58 we've also asked an expert on digiscoping to share his knowledge and give us his top tips.

Birding on a budget

For my first excursion with a digiscope, I opted for a typical beginners' kit, as recommended by London Camera Exchange, comprising a Hawke Endurance scope with 23-70x70 eyepiece, and an Optical Vision universal digiscoping adapter. The combined value of this kit is just under £200, making it among the most affordable entry points into



digiscoping. The Optical Vision adapter is a simple but effective device that clamps over the scope's eyepiece, and is held on by a screw-down friction plate. A variable height plate accommodates most lightweight compact digital cameras, and I used a Fujifilm FinePix F200 EXR. The effective focal length of this combination is around 1,100mm, at an effective aperture of roughly f/14.

The benefits of this outfit are its low cost and relatively low bulk. The universal digiscoping adapter is an awkward shape, but adds little weight to my kitbag, and the Hawke Endurance scope is one of the smaller and lighter scopes available. The downsides became apparent as soon as I started using it. Even with my camera's lens at its maximum telephoto setting I was still seeing a 'tunnel' effect in my images, and



The 'tunnel vision' effect of the vignetting is obvious here, and is caused by the relatively small aperture of the scope's eyepiece

sharpness is pretty low even when the scope is securely fixed to a tripod. Chromatic aberration is noticeable but not objectionable when the scope is used normally, but when a camera is attached images show severe yellow and purple fringing. I struggled to get usable images from this combination, although with a little patience I managed to get what I would consider to be some decent 'record' shots of the birds that I spotted. Some of these would be perfectly usable for inclusion in a web gallery, or as the basis for a sketch in a notebook. However, the quality is far off what I would consider acceptable for a photographic portfolio.





The original version of this shot shows considerable blue fringing around the bird's feathers, but it is easily removed in Photoshop

One step up

As well as making adapters to mount virtually anything to anything else, SRB-Gritum of Dunstable in Bedfordshire also deals in digiscoping equipment. The Opticron HR80 GA ED is one of the company's most popular high-end scopes, and the 'ED' designation means that it contains extra low dispersion glass, which should ensure much improved image quality over the Hawke Endurance. It comes at a cost, though – the HR80 ED retails at £849.99 excluding an eyepiece (available from £57.99), and it weighs almost 2kg.

I attached the scope to my chosen camera – a Nikon Coolpix P6000 – with SRB's made-to-order swing-out digiscoping bracket (£79.95) plus the cable release bracket for compact cameras (£24.95). The digiscoping bracket is designed to allow the camera



Static subjects, such as this heron, make good targets for digiscoping, because focusing is very tricky until you get more experienced

to be swung into position very quickly, which is perfect for a quick grab-shot if something interesting comes into the field of view. My swing-out bracket is fitted with a Nikon P-6000-compatible sleeve, which bolts onto the eyepiece of the scope, and features an aperture to accommodate the camera's lens at its telephoto setting. The whole attachment assembly is well made and surprisingly light. If you don't need to switch between a camera and normal viewing method quickly, the simpler threaded sleeve and camera adapter (£39.99 and £19.99 respectively) are less cumbersome.

Image quality is a step up from the Hawke Endurance, but there's a lot of glass between the camera's sensor and the subject, which makes some fringing inevitable. Sharpness is good, assuming that the whole assembly is held rigidly, although this is a heavy

outfit, and even with a sturdy tripod and head I struggled with camera shake on a moderately breezy day.

SRB-Griturn also sent me a prototype of its new DSLR Bracket (£120.99), which is currently made to order but is in the process of being refined. The DSLR is mounted onto a plate at the end of two rails, along which travels a sleeve that is designed to bolt over the eyepiece of the Opticron HR80 scope. The DSLR's lens then looks directly into the scope. This kit is even more cumbersome, but very versatile. This setup is best pointed at a static subject, like a nest or feeder, since tracking a moving animal is extremely difficult. As an alternative, Opticron also makes an SLR Photo Adapter (£149.99), which allows a DSLR to be attached to the HR80 scope via a T-mount (supplied separately). This adapter contains its own optics.

Magnification explained

The magnification of scopes is relative to subject size as your eye perceives it. So if the total magnification of your scope/eyepiece combination is 100x, that means the subject in the viewfinder appears 100x larger than it is to the naked eye. To find the magnification of your scope and eyepiece combination, divide the focal length of the scope (usually listed in the scope's handbook) by the magnification of the eyepiece. Be aware that the focal length of the scope is not equivalent to the conventional 'mm' figure of a normal lens, and the magnification of the eyepiece may differ depending on the scope to which it is attached.



What's what, and how much



- 1 **SRB-GRITURN SWING OUT BRACKET** £79.95 (made to order)
www.srb-griturn.co.uk, 01582 661 878
- 2 **OPTICRON HR80 GA ED SCOPE** £849.99 (not including eyepiece)
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- 3 **OPTICAL VISION UNIVERSAL DIGISCOPING ADAPTER** £69.99
www.lcegroup.co.uk, 0207 379 0200
- 4 **HAWKE ENDURANCE SCOPE** £119.99
www.lcegroup.co.uk, 0207 379 0200
- 5 **MANFROTTO 190XB** £105.95
www.bogenimaging.co.uk, 01293 583 300
- 6 **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC NGEH1 HYDROSTATIC LOCKING HEAD** £259.95
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- 7 **SRB-GRITURN DIGISCOPING SLEEVE + NIKON P6000 ADAPTER** £39.99 + £19.99
www.srb-griturn.co.uk, 01582 661 878
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ASK THE EXPERT



Martin from London Camera Exchange

We asked Martin, a digiscoping expert from the LCE's Plymouth branch, to answer our questions and offer some top tips on digiscoping for the amateur photographer

Q What sort of budget would someone need to get started in digiscoping?

A Ideally, you need to spend about £350 for the scope and roughly £100 for the adapters to attach the scope to your camera. For better quality you should consider an ED (extra low dispersion glass) scope and these start at around £650 including the eyepiece. You don't absolutely need a top-end compact, and I wouldn't recommend using a DSLR if you're just starting out. A sub-£200 digital compact camera will probably be adequate. Optical stabilisation in the camera's lens helps, but optical zooms greater than 4x don't.

Q Are there any common pitfalls/mistakes that people make when they are new to digiscoping?

A The most common mistake people make is using a camera with more than a 4x optical zoom, but anything greater than this really isn't suitable for digiscoping. Another mistake is trying to run before you can walk, and going straight for a DSLR. They are difficult to use in a digiscoping outfit, mainly because of their bulk. If you're already carrying around a scope with a tripod the last thing you want is a big, bulky DSLR to cart around as well.

Another point that a lot of people tend to neglect is the necessity for a decent tripod. When digiscoping, you are, depending on your gear, potentially dealing with in excess of 120x magnification, so the head and tripod combination is just as important for ensuring sharp images, if not more so, than the quality of the optics.



Q What advice would you give someone interested in starting digiscoping for the first time?

A Let the camera do the work. You've got more than enough to be thinking about framing the shot and keeping everything shake-free at those high magnifications without having to think about exposure. Initially at least, just stick whatever camera you're using on sport or action mode if it has one, and simply let the camera get on with it. Be prepared for a lot of missed shots, but if you stick with it you should find that you get shots that you couldn't get with conventional telephoto lenses of an equivalent cost.

Q If money were no object, what would be your dream digiscoping outfit?

A A Swarovski ATM80HD scope including a 25-50x eyepiece (£2,538) combined with the Swarovski DCB-A digiscoping bracket, which costs £220, and a Nikon Coolpix P6000 or similar compact camera with a cable-release adapter. A sturdy tripod is a must with this sort of combination to avoid camera shake and we've found that the Manfrotto 190CXPRO3 teamed with a 701 HDV head is particularly effective.

For more information visit www.digiscoping.co.uk, a dedicated website maintained by LCE.

● Thanks to the London Camera Exchange and SRB-Griturn for the loan of equipment used in this article and for their advice. Visit www.lcegroup.co.uk for London Camera Exchange branch locations and telephone numbers, and for SRB-Griturn visit www.srb-griturn.co.uk or call 01582 661 878.

www.nicholascamera.com

5. HASSEL CW/CX1/winder.....	E245-C395	MINOLTA A1-3000 IR Tripper
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14 HASSEL 1.4PC MUTAR/new? £695-£1495 PLEASE PHONE/FAX/Email.... MINOLTA TC1 Classic boxed a

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PHASE 1 P25 22MP(V/H)	£NEG	35mm AFboxed asnew	£275	NIKKOR 105mm f2.5 Leica Sc
WASSEL 10mm/PEL asnew	£650	35mm 1:50mm f4 asnew	£475	NIKKOR 105mm 12.5C. CO

500mm Tele-Apo. Tessar	from £1695	120 Backs Polaroid back AF	from £145	NIKON AI 28mm 12 boxed
50mm 1:2.8 FE as new	£1195	645 Pro/TL AE, drive, etc.	£425-£675	NIKON 20mm AF/AI/AS

60mm C/box/asnew	£145-£175	645D + 60mm	£125-£225	NIKON WC-180 VINTAGE
60mm CB /asnew	£825-£895	35mm C/N	£225-£295	NIKON 200mm F2 AIS
H2 COMPLETE NEW UK	£3695	55mm 45mm C/N	£125-£295	NIKON 300mm F2.8 AIS

2000FCW-80mm-F+A12	from £295	55mm, 80mm, 150mm leaf shutter each	£275	NIKON DW31 - F5	
500/553EL Bodies	£375-£995	80mm 11.9/110mm C/W	£145-£245	NIKON F-Prism, Chrome, as new	
553EL F Digital body, as new	£1975-£1005	200mm f4 Macro, tube approx.	£375	NIKON DPH1 TT, 16, 50, 55	

500DC complete Various	£252-£295	150mm 12.8 Apo, unused?	£125-£225	NIKON TC4 (AF) unused
500C + 80 + 12 on	£425-£595	200mm 12.8 Apo, unused?	£745	NIKON TC 14E AF

28mm Macro-Compur	£149	120 backs, Polaroid backs	from £65	NIKON 210mm f5.6 CPAL
30mm Distagon CF/UNUSED	£1475-£2295	AE Prism/Right Angle finder	from £115	NIKON 240mm f5.6 CPAL
40mm Distagon C/T	£795-£1125	Screens, pop shades etc etc	£65	NIKON 450mm f9.0 CPAL

50mm Distagon PZ.BF	5256-2776	PHONE/EMAIL	NIKON MB-16.F80, nov
50mm Distagon C/T/F/Fl	5256-21295		NIKON EF-62A ad. adapter
50mm Distagon C/T/F/Fl	5305-11836	NIKON/CONY ALMA	NIKON D60 button cap. Mak

5	100mm Planar T*	£395-£795	NIKON AF F6 BODY/unused?	NIKON AF F6 BODY/unused?	£995-£1495
5	100mm Planar CF/CFI	£595-£1295			

120mm Makro-CF/Elc	\$795-\$1,495	F3AF-30mm f2.8A/asnew	ENED	OLYMPUS 500mm f8. as new
135mm Makro-PlanarCF	Eask	F90/F90S/asnew/unused?	FromE99	OLYMPUS 6070mmPEN-F7
150mm F2.8 EFF/NEW?	\$425-\$1295	F801/F801S/unused	\$75-\$225	OLYMPUS 90mm f2.8 MACRO

180mm Sonnar CF/CFE	£725-£1375	F50/55/60/65/70/75	from £49	OLYMPUS XA SERVICED
250mm C/CT/CF/CFE	£375-£1395	F60/150/170/F4018/x	from £49	OLYMPUS XA4-A11 Flash
250mm E4-FA/FA/FA/FA	£375-£1395	Panasonic Super Zoom N.A.F.		OLYMPUS PDA FT 3100

15	300mm f/2.8 Apu-1253	£239	24mm f2.8 AF/D	£275	£295	OLYMPUS TCON-143ADPT
15	140 - 250mm Variagon	from £795	24mm f2.8 AF/D	£175	£295	OLYMPUS TCON-17+ADPT
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Magnifier PM/IE 90.51.NEW	E149	200mm 13.5 IFED-F3	E195	PENTAX 21Z/1P
PM90/PM90/BX/FEA/UNUSE P?	E225-E295	200mm 12.8 AF-D	E195-E195	PENTAX AF SIGMA 50 MAK

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35mm 12/12.8 M3	£395-£975	GOSSON ULTRASPOTMETER	£395	YASHICA AF35-70/28-85/70-2
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50mm f2.8 Chromasnew	E245-E295	KODAK RETINA II/III 6C	E175-E295	ZEISS PLANAR 80mm COMP

90mm 12.8 Tele-Elmarit-Gerhar, from 1345	KOWA 6-85mm	1249	ZEISS IKON copy stand, doxer
Russian 20mm-Finder	KOWA 6 LENSES 55-250mm	EASK	ZEISS IKONTA 6x4.5/6x9
Leitz Duo-24-Synchroniser	LEICINA SPECIAL Super 8	Eask	-ZEISS TROPENTROPICAL

5 Finders 21, 28, 35, 50, 90, 135 Vidom - East	LINHOF 220 (120) 6x7 cm	\$595	ZEISS CONTAX rangefinder lens
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V35 B+W Enlarger 40/50mm	E425	MAMIYAC220-80 BXD NEW	E475	Old Very Old Odd Weird, Ugh
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... LOOKS AT WHETHER WE SHOULD DOCUMENT ONLY THE GOOD SIDE OF LIFE AND IGNORE ANY UNPLEASANTNESS



ROGER HICKS is a much-published author on photography. He has written more than three dozen books on the subject, many in partnership with his wife, Frances Schultz. Roger started photography as a teenager in the 1960s and worked professionally in a London advertising studio in the mid-1970s. He has been a freelance photographer/writer since 1981, contributing to many photography magazines, including 'Shutterbug' in America. Visit his website at www.rogerandfrances.com.

BABIES drool. Adolescent pop stars commonly stare vacantly into the distance with their mouths open. This is hardly breaking news. So why do so many people want to document such scenes? Give me fantasy every time. I want pretty girls to look pretty, babies to look adorable, children to look carefree. There's enough misery in the world without adding to it via our photography. Of course, there are exceptions. If British police start laying into defenceless demonstrators, or indeed passers-by, with batons, that's news. If Chinese police kick and beat bound Tibetan monks, the world needs to be reminded of it. We do not, on the other hand, need to be reminded of drooling babies or vacant adolescents.

For that matter, you don't always need fantasy. The youngest son of a friend of mine seemingly considered drooling beneath his dignity, even at the age of six months. That was when I first saw him pick up a towel and wipe his chin.

Part of the urge to photograph drool and unpleasantness is the realisation, which comes to most of us when we first become half-competent at photography, that photography doesn't have to be twee idealisation: we don't have to document only the good side of life, photograph only attractive places, make portraits only of pretty girls and good-looking men. How many of us, especially in our youth, have photographed down-and-outs, drunks barely conscious, stinking old tramps?

Yet don't we owe it to those down-and-outs, drunks and tramps to preserve, or even enhance, what little dignity they have? Otherwise, are we not kicking them while they're down, adding to their degradation and misery?

Again, there are exceptions. We can try to hold these people up as an 'awful warning', so that others do not slide down the same path of degradation. Hold on, though. One possibility is that they are actually happy the way they are. This is not outstandingly likely, but it is not impossible. If they are happy, even if only fleetingly, even if not completely, do we not owe it to them to portray their happiness in the same loving detail as we photograph their misery? When I say 'loving detail', you know what I mean: grainy, pushed Ilford HP5 Plus, properly wet-printed on Multigrade Warmtone. If we're going to exercise that degree of photographic expertise, shouldn't we think about how, and why, and for whose benefit?

Another (and rather likelier) possibility is that they are not happy. Then again, few people are either completely happy all the time, or completely unhappy all the time. As the Buddha himself put it, all sentient beings desire happiness and the causes of happiness, and avoid suffering and the causes of suffering. Happiness, in this context, may be a few minutes' human interaction with the photographer; maybe

even a few hours. It may be the temporary oblivion that comes from a bottle of cheap cider, perhaps paid for by the photographer. And it may be the knowledge that the right photograph, in the right place, may save

someone else from their misery; in which case, they may well suggest pictures that show their dignity and occasional happiness on one side, and their misery on the other. That will be a far more effective 'awful warning'.

Nowadays, I rarely photograph down-and-outs and beggars. I have too much of a sense of *there, but for fortune, go you, go I*. But whether I photograph them or not, I try to give them a pound, or a euro, or a dollar, depending on where I am, and instead of dropping the money in the cup in an embarrassed sort of way and hurrying past, I try to smile, and exchange a word or two, and generally treat them like an equal. Maybe some see it as patronising, but gratifyingly many don't.

Once, in Prague in the Czech Republic, I gave a beggar a dollar. An American woman nearby said disapprovingly, 'He'll only spend it on drink.' I replied, 'Maybe. But it's his dollar now. Not mine. Maybe in his situation I'd spend it on drink, too.'

She agreed with surprising alacrity. She said it had never occurred to her before to view it that way. I think I transformed her world picture.

If only I can get photographers to think the same way... **AP**

☞ The realisation, which comes to us when we first become half-competent, is that photography doesn't have to be twee idealisation ☞

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